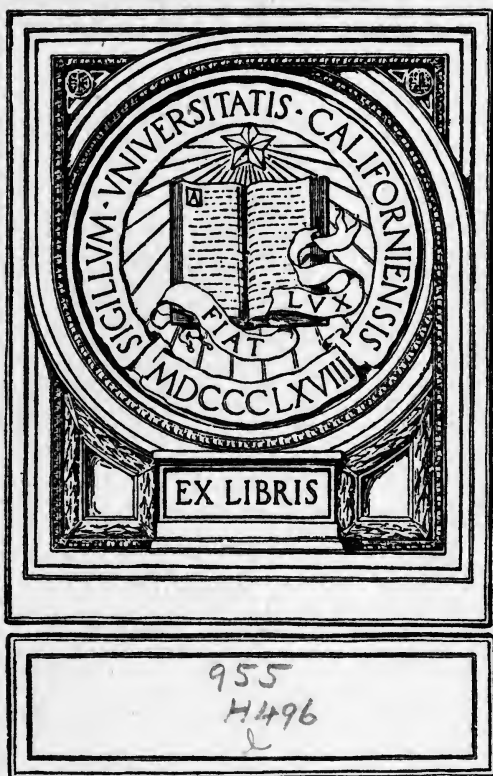




# THE LIGHTED LAMP



✦ C. HANFORD HENDERSON ✦



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**By C. Hanford Henderson**

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
BOSTON AND NEW YORK



# **THE LIGHTED LAMP**



# THE LIGHTED LAMP

A Novel

BY C. HANFORD HENDERSON

*Author of John Percyfield, etc.*

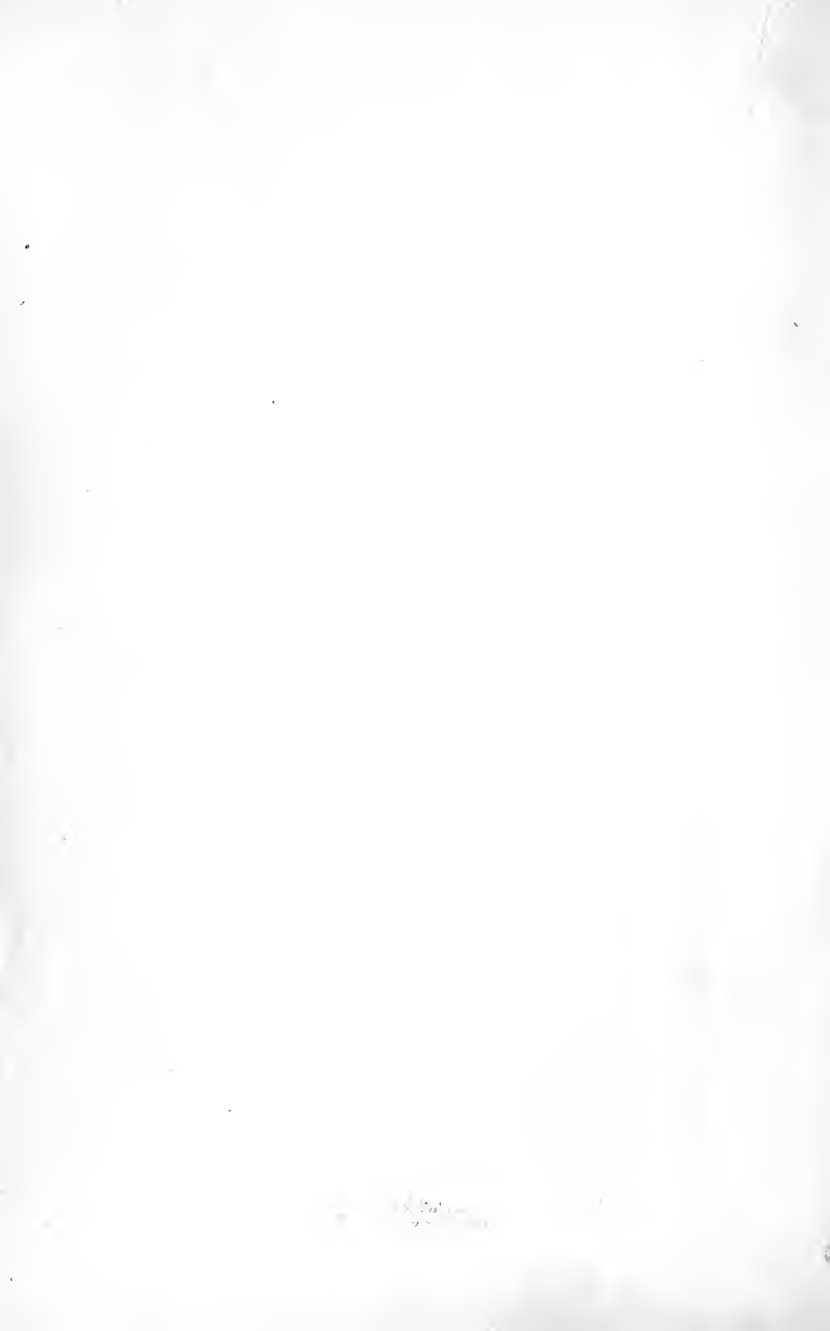
"The universe belongs to him who  
loves, who wills, who prays; but he  
*must* love, he *must* will, he *must* pray."



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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# THE LIGHTED LAMP

## CHAPTER I

### FATE INTERVENES

AT thirty-four, Robert Pendexter had not done anything, and nothing had happened to him. He passed as a good man, but this was rather a negative reputation, for he had never been put to any severe test. He passed as a useful man, but this was because the standard of usefulness had never been critically examined. He passed for a companionable man, but this was among persons who were socially not exacting.

Had one told the plain truth about Robert, one would have said that he was commonplace, that he was inoffensive, and that he was asleep. If Robert had died, then, at thirty-four, he would have been temperately mourned by a small group of friends, but not even his nearest and least indifferent relative, his Aunt Matilda Pendexter, would have thought of writing an obituary notice of him for the "Evening Transcript." Robert would have passed on, one more amorphous, unchiseled soul, to the waiting-hall of souls. But Robert did not die at thirty-four, and shortly after he had reached that birthday, something did happen. Indeed, two things happened. Either one of them alone would hardly have affected the outer current of Robert's life, but coming as they did in conjunction, as our astronomical friends would say, Robert was brought to a sharp turn in the road which carried him into regions

## THE LIGHTED LAMP

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and adventures quite undreamed of before. In the first place, Robert lost his health, as he himself phrased it ; and in the second place, his Aunt Matilda Pendexter suddenly died and left him heir to a property which yielded a trifle over six thousand a year.

As I have said, neither event alone would have shaken Robert out of the ordinary. Had he merely lost his health, his New England conscience would have kept him at his clerk's desk in Doane Street, and the coffee and spice trade would have known him to the end. Had he merely fallen heir to his Aunt Matilda's tidy little fortune, he would perhaps have moved his bachelor quarters from Pinckney Street to the Back Bay ; would have dressed a little better ; would have done his shopping on Boylston Street instead of Washington ; would have been considerably more charitable ; and would perhaps have flown farther afield during his annual two weeks' vacation. But that would have been all. For the rest, he would have remained a junior clerk until he got to be a senior clerk, and a senior clerk until he got to be a junior partner, and a junior partner until he got to be a senior partner, and a senior partner until he died of ennui. But coming as they did, at the same moment, the loss of his health and the unexpected acquisition of an income, even Robert's well-established inertia was powerless to keep him in quite the same rut. The income was ample, — it was five times what he had ever received from Messrs. Watson and Reed, Coffee and Spice Merchants, — and it would have seemed to Robert like flying in the face of Providence not to have used a part of this income to go in search of the thing that was lost.



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In reality, Robert had lost far less than he thought he had. By no courtesy could he be said to have possessed so fair and sound an article as health during the past dozen years; not, indeed, since he had come into business relations with Messrs. Watson and Reed. What had really happened now was that the long hours and bad air and dull life had begun to show marked effects, and a spell of east wind and night-work combined had precipitated a genuine nervous breakdown. Robert would have been vastly surprised had you pointed out to him that this breakdown, instead of being the dire misfortune which he pictured it to be, was in reality the one piece of good luck that had befallen him in Doane Street. Quite unknown to himself, he was really a valuable person to Messrs. Watson and Reed. For the past four years, indeed, he had been in imminent danger of a junior partnership. Just now the times were good, and it was cheaper to keep Robert on a clerk's salary than to make him even a very junior partner. But had profits diminished, or had Robert seemed restive in his clerkship, the older men were quite prepared to add his name to their own, and to make the firm Watson, Reed, and Pendexter. To Robert himself this would have seemed high success. Both Mr. Watson and Mr. Reed regarded the matter quite as good as settled, for to both, Robert seemed too docile and too little adventurous ever to break away from the toils of the coffee and spice trade.

But these amiable plans were all destined to be upset, and this, not because of the breakdown and not because of the legacy, but solely, as I have said, because they happened to fall in conjunction.

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Mr. Watson was away at the time, and perhaps that also had something to do with it. He would never have given up so useful a person as Robert without a pretty stiff fight, for Mr. Watson was made of sterner stuff than Mr. Reed, and could argue with power when his own interests were concerned. The less redoubtable Mr. Reed was at home, but too busy, and too irritated by the amount of extra work that fell on his own shoulders, to go to see Robert personally. It is true that he sent around to Pinckney Street every day to inquire how the sick man fared, but the attention was too impersonal and too obviously perfunctory to make any impression upon even so little exacting a person as Robert. To do Mr. Reed justice, he did not know about the legacy, and regarded Robert's absence as temporary. Robert was too inexperienced to understand just how profoundly Messrs. Watson and Reed were exploiting his youth for their own profit, and much too amiable to wish them any harm; but in reality they both came to a bad end, — they both remained in Doane Street.

It was now the first of September. Robert had been ill for ten days, and was just beginning to get downstairs again, and to take very short and rather forlorn little walks in the Public Garden. On one of these occasions, he managed to get to the doctor's office on Marlborough Street, but so pale and weak that Dr. Cheney did at once what he had meant to do all along. He forbade Robert's return to Doane Street on pain of very dreadful things happening to him, and ordered him in peremptory fashion to get out of town for at least a year. Then he added, almost roughly, "If you know how to play, for Heaven's

## FATE INTERVENES

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sake, man, do it! There's nothing the matter with you but too much work."

Robert was still too weak to travel immediately, so Dr. Cheney suggested a sea-trip, with Europe at the end. It was quite useless for Robert to resist. Almost before he knew it, the masterful doctor had telephoned down to the steamship company and bespoken a berth on the Republic, Boston to Liverpool. She was to sail on the 7th. Meanwhile Robert was ordered to eat all he could, to take a short walk every morning in the Garden, and in the afternoon to drive for an hour or two in a rubber-tired victoria that the doctor promised to select himself at Kenny and Clark's. Moreover, the doctor wrote out Robert's resignation from Watson and Reed's, and made it so emphatic that even Mr. Watson, when he came home, did not venture to protest.

Robert was one of those methodical persons whose clothes and whose affairs are always in proper order. Beyond paying his landlady, buying a steamer rug, making out the necessary cheque for the steamship company, and providing himself with a letter of credit from State Street, he had little to do to prepare for this unexpected, and for him quite unheard-of adventure. In spite of the doctor's contrary orders, Robert did write a few brief notes. He had to tell the cousins at Bolton that he was going away, and explain to them that he was too ill to get out and bid them good-by in person. Little as he ever went there, Bolton was still his home. Then he had to write notes to the few friends to whom his going away would be of any interest. One of these notes was to Stephen Morse, a young lawyer whom he had known slightly at King's Chapel, and with whom he had been associated in one or two church

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matters. It had the immediate effect of bringing Stephen around to Robert's boarding-house.

Stephen was a much more robust person than Robert. He had already grown a little bald, was distinctly putting on flesh, and had the general air of being in line for a judgeship. He was younger than Robert by at least six years, but when the two were together, it was always Stephen that you turned to first, either to salute or to consult, for he seemed the more mature, really the older of the two. Just why he had taken such a fancy to so shy and unimpressive a man as Robert, it would have puzzled Robert to say, — and perhaps even Stephen himself. But that he had taken a great fancy to him was quite evident to all who saw them together. On this particular afternoon in early September, Stephen came racing up the stairs, two steps at a time, and burst into Robert's shabby little room without so much as knocking. Robert was lying down, and looked very frail and delicate. He started to rise when Stephen appeared. "Don't get up!" commanded Stephen. "Don't stir, or I'll go right away!"

Robert sank back on the pillow and held out his hand, smiling. "That would be too bad," he said, "when I'm so glad to see you."

Stephen took the outstretched hand, his gentle manner and voice in curious contrast with his almost boisterous words. "Why in thunder didn't you send for me, old man?" he demanded. "I didn't even know you were sick. I haven't seen you for a week or so, but I thought you were off on your vacation. I've been so all-fired busy myself, I had n't a chance to look you up. You don't play fair, little Pen. By Jove, you don't!"

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It always touched Robert deeply to have Stephen call him "little Pen." Stephen was the only one of his few friends who cared enough for him to have a nickname for him. Robert put out his hand shyly and laid it on Stephen's. "I thought I'd be well every day," he explained; "I had no notion that I was really sick."

"And you're actually going away for a whole year?" asked Stephen, incredulously. "You are n't giving Watson and Reed the go-by, are you?"

Robert nodded. "Yes," he said, "I've pulled out of Doane Street for good and all!" It gave him great pleasure to announce this, for Stephen, of State Street, was disposed to say rather disparaging things of the men and doings in Doane Street.

"Whew!" cried Stephen. "That *is* news. Where on earth are you going? Not to your cousins out at Bolton?"

"No," answered Robert, "I am not going out to Bolton. I am off on a much longer journey than that!"

The thought flashed through Stephen's mind that perhaps Robert meant that he was going to die. He gazed at his friend apprehensively. Robert caught the look and divined its meaning. "No," he said, smiling, "I'm not going to die, — at least not yet. I am going to Europe!"

"To Europe!" echoed Stephen, eagerly. "By all that's good, — not on the Canadian, next Wednesday?"

"No," said Robert, "on the Republic, on Thursday. But why did you say the Canadian? Do you know any one going on her?"

"I *was* going on her, myself," replied Stephen. "Donald Fergusson and I are booked for her, but we'll just have to shift over to the Republic, that's all. It will be

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easy enough. They are all about empty at this time of year. But, say, that's the greatest luck on earth! Let's shake on it."

Robert's face flushed with pleasure. "How good you are!" he said. "Now, I shall want to go. I've been rather dreading it."

"I don't wonder," answered Stephen. "Those doctors are brutes, anyhow! They let a man get as sick as he can get without throwing up the sponge, and then they send him off, all alone, anywhere on God's earth, and expect him to get well, just because they tell him to! By gum, I'd like to give them some of their own medicine."

"I can't let you say anything against Dr. Cheney," protested Robert. "He's been awfully good to me. He is *almost* as kind as you are. But will you tell me, please, how *you* happen to be going to Europe and who Donald Fergusson is?"

"Sure. I happen to be going to Europe because I happen to want to!"

Both laughed. "An excellent reason," said Robert. "But what does the old man say about it?"

"Bigelow? Oh, he's really very decent about it. He says to go if I must, but not to let it be over four weeks. That means that I shall stay five or six."

"The longer the better," cried Robert, in a cheerier voice than had been his for some weeks. "Now tell me about Donald Fergusson. Who is he?"

"You ought to know without any telling," answered Stephen, enthusiastically. "Where are your eyes? Don't you read the magazines? Donald is in most every one of them. He is the coming poet of America. The big guns

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all say so. And a *mighty* nice lad into the bargain. We roomed together at Cambridge my senior year, and all the time I was in the Law School. Donald's all right, really a ripping good fellow. And he'll be glad to have you join us. He's to stay over a year."

"You think I won't be a gooseberry?" Robert questioned doubtfully.

"A gooseberry?" said Stephen. "I don't know what you mean. But if you mean a fellow that's in the way, I am sure you won't. You and Donald will get on famously."

"Has he been over before?" asked Robert.

"No, never. It will mean a lot for him. He has a whole year's leave of absence, the lucky dog!"

"A whole year's leave of absence," Robert repeated. "Leave of absence from what, — writing poetry?"

"Donald Fergusson!" exclaimed Stephen. "Well, I should say not! He wants the year so as to write more poetry. He's the year off from his school. He teaches down South. You didn't suppose he lived on his poetry, did you, and was going to Europe on his royalties?" And Stephen laughed incredulously.

"I didn't know," Robert answered simply; "I thought perhaps he had an income, and could do as he pleased."

Then he flushed a little, for having an income and doing as he pleased was still so novel a sensation in his own case, that the mere mention of a similar possibility for another man seemed a bit like boasting.

Stephen dispelled the feeling in an instant by saying quite brusquely, "No more income than you have. He works for what he has."

Robert would have much preferred to let the matter

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drop there, but his New England conscience made him add rather uncomfortably, "But I have an income, you know; I don't work any longer for what I have." Robert said this quite humbly, almost as if ashamed of the fact.

"You *are* a sly one," said Stephen, in surprise, and looking Robert over as if he appeared for the first time in quite a new light. "A capitalist *incognito*, and passing yourself off for an honest workingman! I like that! What ever possessed you to stay down in that old hole in Doane Street all these years?"

"I had to make my living then," said Robert. "Now I don't. My Aunt Matilda left me most of her property, and now I have enough to live on, — really more than enough."

Stephen had been looking out of the window. He came back to the bed, and said without any trace of the old banter, "I congratulate you, little Pen. To be as young as you are; to have the wolf bought off pretty permanently; to have the world before you, at your beck and call, so to speak, you ought to do great things. What a chance!"

Robert answered very earnestly, "I don't know, Stephen. It's all so new, and the last few days I've felt so low in my mind. I really don't know. Perhaps I'm better fitted for Doane Street than I am for a bigger world. I'm not clever, you know. I've never had a college education. Indeed, I have n't had much of any education at all. I am just a coffee and spice clerk laid on the shelf awhile. It may be too late to make anything else out of me."

"Stuff *and* nonsense!" cried Stephen. "You don't know what you can do, and sick folks are pretty poor judges anyway. Now I'm perfectly well, and being of a sound and disposing mind, as we make the testator say in



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his will, I should affirm that on the whole you 're a pretty nice sort of boy. And I don't think you 're dull, little Pen, really I don't! I'll bet a big apple you make something out of it."

"I hope so," said Robert. His earnestness arrested Stephen's attention, and made him see how deeply Robert was moved by this complete upheaval in his old life.

Just then there came a knock at the door. It was simply the new steamer rug from Hovey's, but it was a fortunate interruption, for it set the friends to talking about the practical matters connected with their trip. Stephen, as the more experienced traveler, had many suggestions to make, and he was careful to steer the conversation away from all serious subjects. When he finally left, he had the satisfaction of seeing that Robert was immensely cheered up. Stephen would much have liked to possess six thousand a year. But he was level-headed, and knew that before long he would be making more than that himself. He was also honest, and so he knew that meanwhile he would rather be Stephen without it than Robert with it.

On Thursday afternoon a shabby one-horse cab made its way through Charlestown to the steamer pier. A small steamer trunk was perched somewhat precariously on the box, alongside the driver. Inside the cab, a suit-case, an umbrella, a loose overcoat, and a shawl-strap containing the new steamer rug divided the space somewhat unequally with the one passenger, a delicate man huddled up in the corner, and looking both disturbed and excited. It was a great event for Mr. Robert Pendexter to be going to Europe. It was not the prospective voyage which excited him, novel as that promised to be, but the break with

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his old life, which it emphasized in so pronounced a fashion.

Robert was going away without a return ticket, something which, so far as he could remember, had never happened before in all his life. He had resisted the allurements set forth by the clerk at the steamship office, and declined a homeward passage at ten per cent reduction. When the clerk insinuated that Robert was throwing away eight dollars, just throwing it away, Robert felt himself that he was rapidly falling into the extravagant ways of the wealthy. He was even a little disturbed that this potential loss of eight good dollars gave him such slight concern. He reflected uncomfortably that his Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have considered that he was already squandering his substance in riotous living. He had even hesitated a moment and turned back, but it was too late. The clerk was already booking another passenger, and had quite lost interest in Robert and his eight dollars.

These and many other equally trivial things went chasing through Robert's brain as he jolted over the rough cobblestones of Charlestown. He had all the frugal habits of our social class, and very suddenly, without any intermediate training, he found himself a member of a totally different class. He felt a little ill at ease, and yet, on the whole, he liked the taste of the new order of things. It is quite astonishing what a difference six thousand a year clear income makes in a man's outlook. Even the fact of riding in a cab was still enough of a novelty to come in for part of Robert's thought. He fell to wondering what the cabman would charge him, and chided himself a little for not asking in advance.

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It occurred to him rather whimsically that Dennis Sullivan, the office boy at Watson and Reed's, would quite open his eyes to see the late clerk riding along so unconcernedly in a cab, and booked for Liverpool, first cabin. Then he suddenly remembered that Dennis himself was pale and overworked. His conscience clutched him uncomfortably. He seemed to be shaking off this old world of work in altogether too light-hearted a fashion. A multitude of disturbing pictures began marching through his excited brain. He was ashamed that he had felt so little grieved over his Aunt Matilda's death. For a moment he quite despised himself as a mercenary, mean-spirited fellow, who had probably been waiting all along for dead man's shoes. His sense of accuracy — Robert had been the most accurate of Watson and Reed's clerks — corrected the thought and made it read dead woman's shoes. This correction aroused his latent sense of humor, and suggested a comparison between his own good-sized walking-shoes and his Aunt Matilda's old-fashioned elastic gaiters. The spell of self-abasement was quite broken. An excessive conscience has indeed this saving grace about it, that when it presses matters much too far, it puts one on the defensive, and an aroused self-esteem pushes the pendulum back to the vertical, — perhaps, in retaliation, a little beyond it.

In his heart, Robert well knew that, living or dead, he had never really cared for his aunt. In a flood of excessive honesty, he admitted to himself that she had been a mean, narrow-minded old woman, and that even this leaving of the greater part of her fortune to him was probably a mere whim, and not any token of affection. But now

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the pendulum had gone too far. Robert felt himself an ungenerous, ungrateful fellow to be remembering the faults of the dead. He recalled many little occasions when his aunt, in her own peculiar and narrow way, had nevertheless shown that she was genuinely fond of him.

Robert's mind, it will be seen, was traveling in a dreary circle. It was fortunate that the sights and sounds outside the cab began to take on a distinctly nautical character. They attracted Robert's attention and carried him out of himself.

The shabby little cab made its way among a tangle of other cabs, express wagons, florists' glass-sided vehicles, and groups of people who seemed by their entire indifference to everything in the way of horseflesh fairly to invoke being run over. But nothing untoward happened. The cab finally drew up at the foot of a narrow and very steep gang-plank,—the tide was nearing the flood,—and Robert and his belongings passed up to the deck of the great steamer, and then down to state-room number 68.

Robert had never been on an ocean steamer before. He was so interested in all the little contrivances that he quite forgot how tired he was. The cabin seemed to him comfort itself,—the beds a little narrow, to be sure, but everything so commodious that he felt again the luxuriousness of the assuredly wealthy. Having the cabin to himself he took as a matter of course, too inexperienced to know that such privacy is sheer good luck for those who pay only eighty dollars passage-money. The whole thing appealed to his sense of order. He was the old methodical Robert of the counting-room, and not yet the intrepid voyager on new and untried spiritual seas.

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Stephen and Donald Fergusson had not yet come on board, but Robert was too delighted with a sense of his own snugness to miss them. He fairly gloated over his little cabin. The steamer trunk just fitted under the lower berth. The suit-case just occupied the cane seat near the door. Umbrella, hat, and overcoat went promptly into the small wardrobe. Only the rug remained. In a moment the strap was unfastened, the rug spread out on the sofa, and Robert sat in his tiny domain as pleased as a child in his first playhouse.

According to the parish register at Bolton, Robert was now thirty-four, but in reality he was still extremely young.

## CHAPTER II

### AT SEA

It was the second day out, and eleven o'clock in the morning. Robert was on the upper deck, comfortably established in his steamer chair, and literally basking in the sun. It was his first appearance on deck. He had been in his bunk all the day before; not seasick, as he assured the lawyer and the poet whenever they looked in upon him, but only lazy. Curiously, Robert spoke the truth; for seasickness, as we all know, belongs to that growing list of matters about which even persons who are ordinarily truthful feel at perfect liberty to lie.

Robert had not been seasick. He had simply felt the reaction of all the excitement of getting off, and had been too weak and ill to get up. He had slept practically all day, and to his own great surprise, practically all night. He had not known such splendid sleep for many months. The sea had been smooth enough to allow the port-hole to be open. The salt air and the gentle rocking motion of the big ship had soothed Robert inexpressibly, and had already done more to cure him than could a whole month of dismal little walks in the Public Garden. His eyes were bright, and his cheeks were tinged with faint color. As he sat there in his steamer chair drinking in the good air and sunshine, he seemed so little like an invalid that several of the deck-trotters looked him over a second time as they passed recurrently before his chair, and wondered

## AT SEA

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why they had not noticed such a nice-looking young fellow the day before.

A couple of young girls making their first little journey into the world, and unconsciously bent upon finding romance in everything, voted Robert handsome, and from that passed on to finding him mysterious. Before the day ended, they had tried to seek out his name on the passenger list. In point of fact they hit upon the wrong name, that of a portly, middle-aged stockbroker, who was neither handsome nor mysterious, but as the young girls never found out the difference, it mattered nothing and romance suffered no jolt.

Robert, meanwhile, quite unconscious of the fact that he was attracting even the least little bit of attention in the world, was aware only of a general sense of well-being that amounted to a positive pleasure. He did not take the trouble to analyze its source. Had the ghost of his Aunt Matilda Pendexter demanded an account, he could have given none. Whether the fattening of his hitherto attenuated pocket-book, or the gentle flow of renewed vitality in his veins, or the pleasant novelty of the situation was responsible for his contentment, he neither knew nor cared. The one thing that really mattered was that he felt life to be good. For once, the inexorable conscience of the Pendexters was taking a vacation.

When the deck steward came around shortly after eleven with his tray of adamantine china cups and adamantine china plates, Robert drank his bouillon as if it had been nectar, and nibbled at the hardtack with as much satisfaction as the gods are supposed to extract from the consumption of ambrosia.

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The three friends were sitting in a row. For once Stephen was not dominant. By some subtle change either in destiny or temperament Robert was unconsciously recognized as the centre of the party. Stephen sat on one side and Donald on the other. There was something undeniably comfortable in watching the world when one had a friend on each side to act as a buffer. Robert would have been somewhat amused had you put it to him in just that way, but in reality his sense of well-being was considerably heightened by this enveloping sense of friendliness. It was such a welcome contrast to his old feeling of being quite alone in the world.

Beyond Stephen stretched a long line of steamer chairs filled with men, women, and children, — mostly women. Beyond Donald stretched another long line of steamer chairs filled with other men, women, and children, — mostly women. Whatever activities they had been up to before coming on board, or whatever they planned to be doing as soon as they should land, now made scant difference. A mantle of momentary similarity had settled over the entire line. It was too contented to be called ennui. It was rather that sense of suspended occupation which makes of an ocean voyage a veritable parenthesis of similarity between very dissimilar activities. It is true that one gentleman was known to be in the writing-room producing reams of scrawling manuscript, but it was spoken of as something quite abnormal, and by the more experienced travelers was even regarded as reprehensible, for it seemed to cast some slight reflection upon the prevailing idleness.

It could hardly be said that any of the passengers were



thinking. Robert's thoughts, at any rate, were far from profound. They dwelt for the moment upon the bouillon he was drinking. It struck him as odd that he should be eating again at eleven when he had only breakfasted at nine. "What do they call it?" he asked, turning to Stephen, "lunch or luncheon?"

"Well," replied Stephen, with the air of delivering a final judgment, "as a lawyer, I should say that, the meal being now in progress, it ought to be called 'lunch-on.'"

"Hang such puns," cried Donald. "And I'll bet you cribbed it anyhow."

"No, I did n't," retorted Stephen. "It just came to me, as you poets would say, like a shaft of light, on the spur of the moment!"

"We should say nothing of the sort," objected Donald. "Not, at any rate, in describing such an effort."

But Robert was in the grip of what Donald afterwards came to recognize and to name as the demon of literalness, and was bent on pursuing the subject to the bitter end. "What *is* the difference, anyway, between lunch and luncheon?" he persisted.

"Well, if you must know," murmured Stephen, with the air of imparting a confidence, "on land, the difference is about one dollar and a quarter; at sea, it is precisely two hours!"

"Well, *that's* a clean steal, out and out," said Donald. "I'll wager you got *that* out of the 'Transcript,' and at least four years ago!"

"Only half of it," replied Stephen, imperturbably, "and last week. The other half was another shaft, and also immediate."

## THE LIGHTED LAMP

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Robert was still naïve enough to find some amusement in this rather obvious play of words. It all came so quickly and so easily that he felt somehow that his two friends must be cleverer than he. He wondered momentarily whether they could have made good against Mr. Watson, or even against Mr. Reed, two heavy wits, who commonly triumphed over their junior clerks by a process which any one less good-natured than Robert would have called bullying.

Robert glanced down the long line of steamer-chairs beyond Donald, idly wondering whether all the others were as comfortable and happy as he. He had had little opportunity for studying his fellow passengers, and even now the opportunity was very slight, for most of them were lost in books, or hidden in veils, or wrapped in slumber. One young girl, like himself, had leaned forward to study this linear display of humanity, and caught Robert's eye. There was something funny in the spectacle, and, almost without meaning to do it, she sent Robert a quick little smile of amused appreciation. It was such a frank and pleasant smile that Robert naturally smiled back. The girl quickly looked away, and evidently thought no more about it. But to Robert it was something of an adventure, and he found it difficult to keep his eyes from that part of the line.

Donald had been quick to see the whole affair, and was bent upon getting some fun out of it. "An eye for pretty girls, I see," he chuckled, "and most excellent taste. But I should n't have suspected it of our demure little Pen!"

"Girl!" snorted Stephen; "she's thirty, if she's a day."

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"Wrong again," said Donald, confidently. "I'll allow twenty-five, but not another year. And all women are girls until they're married or get to be old maids."

"Do you know who she is?" asked Robert.

"I know perfectly," answered Donald, in the same low voice. "She is a Boston school-teacher."

"How do you know that?" said Robert, incredulously.

"Anybody with two eyes in his head could see that," retorted Donald, lightly. "She carries a bag; she wears spectacles; and she does not believe half she's told!"

"You see more than I do."

"Naturally! You have no imagination, poor man," said the poet, compassionately. "The bag is downstairs in her state-room. The spectacles are in her pocket. Her disbelief shows itself in the beautiful curve of her eyebrows."

"What a dreadful person you are!" laughed Robert. "I suppose you even know the lady's name."

"Certainly. It is Miss Smith."

Robert was rapidly falling in with the spirit of banter, and added quickly, "Which means that you don't know anything about it."

"Which means that I don't know anything about it," repeated Donald, in his lazy fashion. "But why not take an occasional excursion into the unknown? Why stay always anchored in the Bay of Facts?"

Robert was quite willing to essay such excursions, but as yet he did it clumsily. He *would* keep on the same tack too long, and never seemed to know when to port the helm. This was maddening to Donald. He himself touched lightly upon all subjects, and let them go with the same ease before any one could possibly tire of them. But

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he resolved to keep good-natured, for, in spite of Robert's limitations, Donald had taken rather a fancy to him. Moreover, Robert's awkwardness was forgivable, for it was the frank awkwardness of a boy. When he was tickled intellectually, he believed, like a boy, that he could go on being tickled somewhat indefinitely by the same stimulus. His next remark was quite in line: "I suppose that man over there in the atrocious ulster is Mr. Smith."

"Undoubtedly," said Donald, amused at Robert's tiresome persistence. "And the small boy howling because he is not allowed to have another biscuit is Master Smith. We shall be meeting the Smith family all over Europe."

Stephen apparently had not been listening, but he leaned over as soon as Donald stopped speaking, and said with the air of finality that made his friends so sure of the judgeship, "And sometimes, my hearties, we shall be of the same family, even we, and to more discerning persons we'll be the *Messrs.* Smith. But you are wrong about the lady. She is *not* from Boston, and she is *not* a school-teacher. She is a girl from the golden West, an heiress from Saskatchewan, for why otherwise that hair like ripened wheat and the eyes like prairie skies!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Donald, mockingly. "The judge is falling into poesy!"

Just then the rumor got abroad that a ship could be seen on the port side. The greater number of passengers rushed over to the deserted deck to catch a glimpse of her, our three young friends among the number. But it proved a false alarm. All that could be seen was the shimmering gray of the sea against the darker gray of the sky. No white sail or dark smoke-stack disturbed the unbroken

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horizon. To Robert and Stephen it seemed a sharply penciled straight line against the deeper ocean of air. To the more imaginative Donald, and perhaps also to "Miss Smith," since she remained after the others had gone, it appeared not as a prosaic straight line, but as a magnificent earth curve separating the partly known from the wholly unknown.

Robert did not return to his chair. Yielding to Stephen's brotherly advice, he went down to his state-room, and took another nap to such good purpose that, when he reappeared at luncheon, two hours later, he had apparently pulled himself up one more rung on the ladder of health. Donald found himself watching Robert. It was as if new life were stirring in what Donald had taken at first to be rather dull clay. Robert grasped so eagerly at the simplest pleasures that Donald, a born lotos-eater, found himself exclaiming softly, "It's pathetic. The poor fellow must have been half starved!"

By some common impulse, all the passengers took an after-luncheon constitutional on the upper deck. The decks were so unusually wide that the three friends could easily walk abreast, even though the current of promenaders surged in both directions. By an equally common impulse, the constitutional died away, and our young friends found themselves with an afternoon on their hands. With the experience of an old voyager, Stephen proposed shuffle-board, and immediately went in search of the necessary apparatus. It was in charge of a veteran tar, who had long since withdrawn his eye from nautical matters to bestow it upon human concerns, and notably, at the end of the voyage, upon that midway plaisance in the garb of

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the traveling public which is the recognized home of the coin of the realm. Future prospects seeming good, the Veteran Tar bravely bestirred himself, and soon had the needed cage chalked out on the deck. The eight circular pieces of wood marked plus were neatly ranged on one side of the field, while the eight marked zero ranged up on the other. The young men were each armed with the necessary shuffle-push, and apparently all was ready.

It suddenly occurred to Stephen that they needed another player. "Oh, bother," he exclaimed, "we ought to have a fourth, so we could play sides. It's a lot more fun."

The Veteran Tar was much too discreet to offer. There was no other possible fourth to overhear the remark except Miss Smith. She was just then doing what she promised herself should be the last round in her post-luncheon constitutional, and had turned a corner around one of the deck-houses just in time to hear Stephen's remark. Alicia dearly wanted the exercise, so she stopped and said in her frank, clear voice, "I should be glad to serve as fourth, if I may."

The young men had not seen Alicia, and were naturally taken by surprise at hearing this voice out of the empty-rear. They quickly recovered themselves, however, and as quickly touched their caps. Robert's was white, and very correct, the others declared, as they had themselves thoughtlessly bought prosaic blue caps. The three exclaimed in chorus : —

"That would be very nice."

"Sure, we would like it."

"Oh, please do!"

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How much Alicia understood of this mild babel it would be difficult to say, but she easily gathered that the noise meant assent, and was looking about for a shuffle-push. Stephen promptly handed her his. "Please take this," he said, and then disposed of the question of sides and of introductions by adroitly adding, "Perhaps you will be kind enough to play with Mr. Pendexter. Mr. Fergusson and I will put up our prettiest game against you."

Robert rose to the occasion by saying quickly, "That would be very nice." Then, remembering that Stephen's name had not been mentioned, he added, "Mr. Morse has played before, and evidently thinks that he can beat us."

It had not occurred to any one to ask whether Alicia had ever played before. She quickly assented to the arrangement, expressing herself, however, more by her smile and her manner than by any specific words. She rather appreciated the cleverness with which the men had introduced themselves without appearing to do so, and she was careful to connect the right name with the right man. Either unconsciously or from intention, Alicia refrained from mentioning her own name. Stephen was not satisfied with the omission, and after they had placed themselves to begin the game, asked with the persuasive courtesy of a lawyer, "And may we ask, Madam, what might be your own name?"

Alicia was stooping over to put her first shot, and so no one could see her eyes and know whether they twinkled or not. She answered in the same clear, frank voice, "Shall I say as the Quaker did? It might be Smith, but happily it is n't!"

Robert colored and laughed awkwardly. Donald tried

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to look as if he had not heard the remark. But Stephen answered with a blandness just a trifle overdone, "I'm glad that it is n't Smith. That is rather a commonplace name, is n't it?"

In spite of this small passage at arms, Alicia still omitted to mention her name, and our young friends had to content themselves during the rest of the voyage by referring to her in thought and speech as "Miss Smith." The omission was not caused this second time by intention, but merely by the fact that just then Alicia put her first shot, and as she succeeded in landing a counter very neatly in the ten-place, she was justified in regarding her achievement as for the moment more important than her name. She turned to Robert and said in her bright way, "Do you see, Mr. Pendexter, how well I've started off?"

The suspicion floated simultaneously through the minds of the three friends that very probably Alicia had played shuffle-board before. Thus challenged, both Stephen and Donald played their very best. But Alicia and Robert also played their best. Which was the better playing, one need not speculate upon, but certainly Alicia and Robert happened to make their plays fall in with the motion of the ship, and so gain the greater count. When they finally stopped playing, the games stood two to one in their favor.

While Stephen and Donald were helping the Veteran Tar put away the things, Alicia and Robert drew over to the railing and stood talking about the game. "It's good exercise. We must play again," Alicia was saying. Then she turned impulsively towards the sky and sea, and added with an intensity that fairly startled Robert, "And yet,



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in the presence of two such immensities, it is odd that one should be in the mood for any game! ”

Robert followed her gaze towards the impenetrable gray wall of the northern sky, and when he looked around again, Alicia had gone.

“ She ’s good fun, all right,” said Stephen, “ whatever her name may be.”

“ But how awkward about the name!” lamented Robert. “ How could she have heard our talk this morning? ”

“ I ’m not sure that she did hear it,” was Donald’s comfortable suggestion. “ It may have been a mere coincidence. But of course it may be that she has awfully sharp ears.”

Stephen ignored their conjectures, and gave the judicial opinion that it was a mere coincidence.

“ Well,” said Donald, “ I ’d give a new penny to know! ”

“ But I’ve just told you!” Stephen’s tone assumed severity.

“ All the same,” protested Donald, “ I ’d give a new penny to know.”

“ Well, whether she heard or not,” continued Stephen, “ she played like a Scandinavian goddess. But I ’ll give up about her age. Donald may have put it too high, or I may have put it too low. You never can tell about these very blonde people. They may be twenty or they may be forty! But there ’s one thing sure, my hearties. In point of experience, she ’s grandmother to all of us.”

“ As we don’t know a blessed thing about her,” said Donald, “ we ’re free to make up any tale we please. To little Pen she shall be the Princess Beautiful; to Stephen she shall be the wife of Thor; to me she shall be an enigma.

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And each man's tale is as good as any other man's, for we're equally ignorant. We're all in the same boat."

"Do you still think she's from Saskatchewan?" asked Robert.

"With such manners, — and so sure of herself!" exclaimed Stephen. "Not on your life, little Pen. She's from Boston, or Philadelphia, or some other *very* respectable place. And it's not her first crossing, either! A girl from the wheat-fields could n't have butted into the game that way and not made it seem a little bit flirtatious. Miss Smith gave me the impression that the game was hers, and that she had graciously allowed us to join in. Did you observe the way she led off without being urged, — or even asked?"

"It was a woman's right to do that," suggested Donald.

"Precisely," cried Stephen, in triumph. "But only a very well-bred woman is so sure of her rights that she just claims them without making any fuss. And for my part, I don't believe that Miss Smith will know any of us, not *even* little Pen, except on the top deck and within hailing distance of the Veteran Tar."

The three friends took a little stroll on the deck, and then Stephen, the kind tyrant, marched Robert off to his bunk for another rest. Again Robert tasted of that wonderfully restoring sea-sleep. At six, the room steward brought hot water and suggested that it was time to dress for dinner. His manner was too mild, however, to make any impression upon a man so steeped in sleep. The final bugle found Robert still in his bunk. Stephen stuck his head in the door to say that he and Donald were ready for dinner, but would willingly wait until Robert dressed.

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Robert would hear of nothing of the sort, so Stephen took himself off, casually bidding Robert to put on his best bib and tucker.

Robert jumped up and dressed hurriedly. It was to be his first appearance at dinner. He got into his best suit, a black cutaway coat with waistcoat to match and gray trousers bordering on lavender. He had chosen a bright red tie, and so attired of a week-day, felt very much dressed up. It was the suit he wore to church, and was indeed the only one he owned in addition to the sack suit in gray that he wore at all other times. Robert started for the dining-saloon with the pleasant consciousness that he was well dressed. He noticed that several of the stewards looked at him rather curiously as they passed him in the corridors, but he took this as a silent tribute to his elegant appearance. Once inside the saloon, Robert's complaisance gave way to consternation. Nearly all the other men had on evening clothes, and showed an expanse of white linen that seemed to make light of the more sombre part of their attire. Most of them had white ties. The women were still more gorgeous. Many of them wore low-necked gowns and some had short sleeves. The display of jewels was almost dazzling. To Robert's unsophisticated eye, it seemed as if they must be going to a party, and a very grand one, at that. When he reached his own table, he found that Stephen and Donald were attired like the rest. It flashed over Robert that this was what was meant by dressing for dinner. He had not been given to dining out, and in his simple boarding-house world, it was not the custom for junior clerks to own evening clothes. The Sunday cutaway served for all festive occasions as well. Stephen and Don-

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ald covered his embarrassment as best they could by allusions to the seven sleepers and what not. But their efforts availed little. Poor Robert felt upset and uncomfortable. And when he reflected that he had not only made a mistake to-night, but would have to go on making it for at least five nights more, wild plans began to form themselves of going to bed hereafter at six and having his dinner served in his state-room.

It seemed to Robert that everybody looked their disapproval, from the captain and ship's officers down through the long line of passengers to the very stewards. One Englishwoman who sat at the captain's table, and was supposed to own a title, lifted her tortoise-shell lorgnette and regarded Robert quite as she might have looked at a new variety of animal. Robert caught the look. Instead of being the traditional last straw, however, it proved his salvation, for it aroused his sense of humor. "I may look out of place," he thought, much comforted, "but at any rate, I don't look as ridiculous as you do!" And after that, he not only stood the ordeal of the dinner, but even enjoyed the meal.

In reality, if poor Robert could only have known it, his flaming red tie brought out the color in his cheeks, and made him look singularly wholesome and handsome. People were looking at him, partly in surprise, it is true, but also partly in admiration. Donald had a poet's instinct for beauty, and his eyes kept wandering towards Robert, while he murmured to himself, "Give him time, and our little spice clerk will be stunning, fairly stunning!"

The dinner finally came to an end. Stephen and Donald went up to the smoking-room for their cigars and coffee.

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Robert declined their cordial invitation to be of the party. He decided to take a few turns on deck, and get back to his bunk at the early hour prescribed by Dr. Cheney. In the companionway Robert ran across Alicia. He would hardly have known her, however, had she not given him a friendly nod, for she, too, had emerged from the chrysalis stage and put on the butterfly. She wore a low-neck black lace gown, which would have been rather sombre for so young a woman had it not been relieved by her own radiant person, and by a curiously beautiful jewel which hung suspended by a slender gold chain about her neck. Robert nodded and went on to his state-room. He tried to conjure up some term which would describe Alicia. When he compared her to such beauties as had from time to time wandered into his Pinckney Street world, he found himself quite at a loss. He did not know Alicia's type, but at least he knew that it was different from theirs. Donald could have supplied the missing term. He, too, had caught a glimpse of Alicia in her dinner-gown, and had told himself, and afterwards Stephen, that she possessed, in a marked degree, distinction; and for Donald this meant that he could say nothing more flattering.

Robert got his overcoat and cap, and walked furiously around the upper deck. His old rebellious mood swept over him. It made him hot to think of the people who had probably laughed at him at dinner. It seemed to him a monstrous thing that in this larger world in which he so unexpectedly found himself, the social prescriptions should be so tyrannous. He was not thinking very coherently, but he had a vague idea that he should not like to dress for dinner every night, and that if he did do it, he should

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probably not do it right. Then there came the still more dispiriting reflection that doubtless there were other social matters which were just as tyrannous, and that he knew nothing about, in fact that he could know nothing about until, by contravening them, he would learn in the valley of humiliation. When Robert thought of his immense ignorance, he wondered whether it would not have been better for him to have stopped in Doane Street, and got back his health by the liberal use of cod-liver oil and horseback exercise. Dr. Cheney had mentioned neither of these sources of health, but Robert had once known a man for whom they had been prescribed, and as they were both expensive, he had a confused notion that they must also be effective.

When Robert was quite at his lowest, he noticed Alicia, wrapped in a long opera cloak and leaning against the railing. She was absorbed in her two immensities, now merged into one, the black, impenetrable mystery of the night. It did not occur to Robert that Alicia had probably chosen to be alone, nor did he notice that her lips were moving in some voiceless meditation or prayer. He rushed up to her and said, with a boyish impulse which amused her in spite of its quite unwarranted intrusion upon a vastly different mood, "Don't you think it's a useless bother to dress for dinner every night? Don't it bother you, now, honest?"

Alicia smiled. "You know that women are supposed to care for dress," she said quietly.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Robert, impatiently. "But if you were a man. How would you dress, if you were a man?"

Alicia looked at Robert and hesitated a moment. Then

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she answered quite simply : " If I were a man, I think I should dress in any way that made me least conspicuous."

Robert did not entirely understand the reply, but he had a quick intuition of remoteness, as if the voice had come to him from a long distance out in space. He said " Good-night " abruptly, and hurried down to his stateroom.

Alicia frowned. Then she dismissed Robert entirely from her thoughts and went on with her meditation. Half an hour later, when she joined Mrs. Costello, she had quite forgotten the matter, and spoke only of the beauty and mystery of the night.

## CHAPTER III

### UNDER THE STARS

FOR the next two or three days Robert had the feeling that somehow life was very full. It was not that anything remarkable happened. Outwardly it was rather a restricted life. Although the Republic was such a large boat, the first-class passengers had all their quarters amidships, and really enjoyed less sweep than on smaller boats of the older type. It was the price they had to pay for the lessened motion.

Robert ate and slept and talked and walked, and all of these, it seemed to him, he did prodigiously, and on a scale which only a week before would have appeared to him to be fairly extravagant. What his Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have thought of all this self-indulgence, Robert did not allow himself to ask. Even he was almost frightened to find how much he liked the idleness, and what an undoubtedly comfortable feeling the unaccustomed luxuriousness of his present life gave him. To get up when he pleased, to do what he liked all day, to take a whole hour for luncheon if the talk made it seem worth while, to sleep whenever he felt inclined, to read books in the morning, to play shuffle-board of an afternoon, even to wear the despised cutaway coat of a week-day, were all too novel and too much of a contrast to the alternating monotony of Doane Street and Pinckney Street, not to force themselves oddly and frequently upon his attention. The other passengers seemed to take all these things for



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granted, and to be for the most part unaware that there was a more humdrum, work-a-day aspect to life. They would probably have failed to understand the source of Robert's buoyant pleasure quite as completely as Robert himself failed to comprehend their own daily customs and modes of thought. We must, of course, except the romantic school-girls. As we have seen, they had already sensed some mystery in Robert without being at all able to define or name it.

It was this violent contrast between the life which he had just thrown over and the larger life which he could not yet be said to have put on, that really constituted the chief element in Robert's pleasure. It was also the source of considerable pain, for at any moment, quite without warning, some small circumstance would come up, trifling enough in itself, but still sufficient to make Robert perceive that the others were to the manner born, while he was essentially an outsider. At times he rejoiced that he was, for he felt that, after all, he was freer than they. But it was still a world of very mixed values. More frequently Robert regarded himself as an interloper, without any clear right to move among them on equal terms. He had the disagreeable feeling that he was sailing under false colors.

Stephen found Robert increasingly interesting, and Donald found him less and less tiresome, but neither of them quite divined the source of Robert's heightened alertness. Having always moved, themselves, in this larger world, they could not realize the effect of being suddenly introduced into it from a totally different world, and of being introduced, as it were, without any preparatory vestibule. Even the poet's lively imagination, capable as it

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was of making tremendous excursions into the unknown, could not quite fathom this particular depth in the Bay of Facts.

But real as these minor currents in Robert's daily steamer life were, they quite merged themselves and got lost in the mightier physical current now sweeping over him, the current of awakened life. The idleness, the long hours of sleep, the abundant food, the wealth of sun and air, the excellent companionship, were just what Robert needed, — much more than cod-liver oil and lonely horse-back exercise. He responded in a way that would have done Dr. Cheney's heart good. Even Stephen, witnessing this daily miracle of renewed life, felt constrained formally and judicially to withdraw his own harsh judgment against the doctor for packing Robert off from Boston in such apparently casual fashion.

As the tide of life rose higher, Robert quickly relinquished his semi-invalid habits. Instead of going to bed before nine, he got to staying up until ten, and finally even until eleven. Fortunately the weather was warm, and sea-life at its best. Robert began to feel the enchantment of the sea, and gradually, as he grew accustomed to it, the still more wonderful enchantment of the night. He sat out on deck, exulting in the sensation of rushing through void spaces to meet unknown worlds. The mystery of the night, a mystery which one feels most keenly at sea, or on the desert or the mountain-top, came to Robert as a novel experience. In Pinckney Street he had never really felt the night. He had felt the darkness and the gloom, had been blinded by the sharp points of the electric lights, had been conscious of liking the twilight hours

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because they meant release from Doane Street ; but of the night as a whole, its mystery, its enlightening darkness when the soul is thrown in upon itself in the wonderful silence of a sleeping creation, Robert had really had no taste. It became for him a time of physical excitement. When he could, he escaped from the others, and sought out some spot farthest removed from all the steamer's sounds and light. It was the easier to do this, because Stephen and Donald always went for a smoke directly after dinner, and fell into the way of supposing that Robert was already in his bunk when at last they sauntered out for a final promenade. But even the poet never took more than a few short turns on deck, for both he and Stephen felt, without ever expressing it, that dinner-clothes and the after-dinner mood went better with sound and light and jollity than with deserted decks and the solemn stillness of the night.

One evening, however, when the voyage was nearing its end, and Robert's invalidism had become more and more of a fiction, Stephen insisted that Robert should join them in the smoking-room. Robert tried to beg off. He had almost a child's dislike of tobacco-smoke, and a strong repugnance, which his Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have considered most proper, for all bar-room odors and scenes. Stephen would not hear of it, however, for it had got noised abroad that a particularly good story was to be told that night, and he urged, with some show of logic, that an ocean voyage would hardly be a complete experience without at least one evening in the smoking-room.

The three friends went up directly from the dinner-table, and established themselves in a cosy corner where

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they could see and hear all that was going on. The room filled up earlier than usual. There were comfortable, well-fed, worldly-looking men, in glossy dinner-coats and immaculate linen. There were keen, experienced, worldly women, who wore their beautiful gowns quite as a matter of course, almost contemptuously indeed, and altogether without that conscious air of being in holiday attire which among the women of Robert's acquaintance commonly spoiled such effect as they might otherwise have achieved. Robert was somewhat dismayed to see so many women in what was manifestly nothing but a floating bar-room, but they themselves were so completely unshocked that Robert felt disposed to count his own feeling a probable prejudice. That Alicia was there made it at least respectable. Aside from the odors of stale beer and stale tobacco smoke, it seemed to Robert to be on the whole a comfortable, pleasant world, and he quite entered into the spirit of the scene. Everybody seemed talking at once, and Robert found himself wondering what would have been the result if all the lips sealed from speech by cigar or cigarette had added their share to the existing babel. Presently, however, there was a partial lull, the half silence of expectation, and it was evident that the time for story-telling had arrived.

By a common impulse, all eyes were turned towards one corner, to an old sailor sitting nonchalantly in one of the big armchairs. He was puffing away at an old pipe, his legs were crossed, and though he occupied the centre of the stage, so to speak, he appeared wholly unconcerned. Our young friends were surprised to recognize in him the Veteran Tar, the chalker of diagrams and keeper of scores on the upper deck. But something had happened to the

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old man. Instead of being the subservient mariner of their afternoon games, he had on a just perceptible swagger, and the unmistakable air of being quite as good as anybody.

"They've filled him up with grog, all right," said Stephen, "or he'd never face the music in that style. It'll be more fun than a goat to hear him yarn."

"Do you suppose it really happened?" asked Robert, as soon as the tale was ended, and the applause had somewhat subsided.

"Lord, no," answered Stephen. "The old fool made up every word of it."

"Hold on," broke in Donald, "don't let the Judge pervert your literary taste, little Pen. The Veteran Tar has a fine imagination, — which is more than I can say for you two. He's an artist, a poet, a creator, almost a genius!"

"Oh, tommy-rot!" exclaimed Stephen. "Cut out your hot air. It's time for little Pen to go to bed. Let's have a night-cap."

As Stephen spoke, he beckoned to a waiter, and both Stephen and Donald gave their orders.

The waiter vanished before Stephen had time to turn to Robert. "What will you have, little Pen?" he asked. "Better take something good and plain, nothing so fancy as the poet indulges in."

"I?" answered Robert. "Nothing at all. I sleep too much as it is. I don't need a night-cap."

"Oh, you'd better," persisted Stephen. "Just to learn how to order it when you get to some town where the water's bad. Better try a plain whiskey and soda."

When the waiter returned, Robert ordered a plain

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whiskey and soda. It was the first time that he had ever done such a thing, and it made him feel exceedingly worldly.

It was now the last night out. The Republic was expected to make Liverpool some time the following morning. The ocean had become less lonely. The number of vessels had greatly increased, and made the waters seem almost populous. There were little coastwise steamers puffing about at all angles, and with the air of the highest importance; ocean tramps, apathetic and ungainly, bound for the four quarters of the globe; fishing boats and sailing vessels of all possible sorts and conditions, apparently headed for no particular haven, but bent only upon getting in the way.

On board the Republic, there was that unmistakable feeling of approaching port. Stephen sniffed it in the air. Even Robert and Donald, making their first crossing, sensed the difference. In mid-ocean there had been an astonishing amount of comradeship, and a still more astonishing amount of self-revelations. Confidences that ordinarily would have been warranted only by a life-long friendship were offered with comparative freedom to almost entire strangers. It is one of the curious phenomena of the sea.

But now the land attitude was beginning to reassert itself. The old prudential reserve was coming back in full force. In some cases the pendulum swung absurdly far the other way. In place of the larger and more gracious humanity there came a rigid primness that chilled the air and made the very food seem cold. The last dinner had been eaten. It is always a less successful function on English than on Continental steamers, but to-night it was

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less successful than ever. Each Englishman, conscious of having let himself go just a little bit in mid-ocean, was now making conscientious efforts to atone for his friendliness. The method adopted to achieve this genial end was commonly the same. It consisted in looking extremely remote and self-centred, and in implying, as far as manner could do it, that any advances during the earlier part of the voyage had been a regrettable mistake, and wholly the fault of the other man. The result of this widespread effort was a settled gloom. There were, of course, oases in this desert of respectability. There were groups of Americans still so human and so untouched by Anglican manners that they were not abashed at being cheerful. There were non-insular Europeans who continued to be communicative and well-bred. At the table of our three young friends, the other seven passengers were either English, or else Colonials who rapidly recovered their dullness the nearer home they got. The odds against even a passable dinner had been rather heavy. But Stephen had declined to be depressed. He was even more hilarious than usual. He made pun after pun, and some of them not so bad, and capped one good story with another. But the line had been drawn, and none but his compatriots allowed themselves to be amused.

The effect on Donald was somewhat different. No detail of the situation escaped him. It struck him as so delicious, the obvious effort of Stephen, the obvious resistance of the islanders, that he chuckled audibly from the soup through to the dessert. His own contributions to this grim feast had been only occasional, but they put poor Robert on pins and needles, for only their subtlety kept them

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from being impossible. Robert could not help enjoying these thrusts. He liked their cleverness and their audacity. But at the same time he felt highly uncomfortable, and sat through the meal in awkward silence. He was conscious of giggling when he meant only to smile. At last the dinner had dragged itself to an end and the dining-saloon emptied with almost an audible sigh of relief. The stewards, Robert remembered, had looked even more bored than usual.

The three friends were now on deck again, and cosily established in their steamer chairs. Stephen and Donald had for once omitted their after-dinner smoke. The fresh air, the renewed presence of the immensities, the untroubled procession of the stars, seemed to restore all things to their accustomed poise. The three friends had placed their chairs well forward, where the lights, in deference to the lookout on the bridge, had either been covered up or extinguished. The soft swish of the water against the vessel's side was the only thing that was heard. The air brushing past their faces with its pleasant suggestion of on-rush was the only thing that was felt. The tranquillity of the stars was the only thing that was seen. Other dark figures sat all around them, silent but not unfriendly. The sea and the night held them all under their joint spell.

Stephen was the first to speak: "I say, Pen, what's the use of having a poet along if he can't speak up at such a moment as this? Donald, my boy, it's up to you. Give us a bit of verse about the sea, or the night, or both, or either, or neither. Minstrel, ahoy, time up!"

Without any hesitation, and in a richer and more vibrant voice than Robert had ever heard him use before,



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Donald repeated some lines of his own, "An Invocation to the Sea."

When Donald ceased speaking there was a silence for some moments. Stephen was the first to break it: "A pretty tune, minstrel, and bravely sung. Good Unitarian doctrine, too. But the rhyming is a bit obvious for me. Give us something from one of the *senior* poets."

"All right, old man," said Donald, without any resentment. He thought for a moment, and then repeated those beautiful lines of Matthew Arnold, beginning: —

"Weary of myself, and sick of asking  
What I am, and what I ought to be,  
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea."

When Donald finished, both Stephen and Robert thanked him heartily, and Stephen, who seemed to know the whole poem by heart, softly repeated the final lines, —

"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he  
Who finds himself, loses his misery!"

"Do give us another, Donald," said Robert, earnestly.

"It's the Judge's turn," answered Donald, lightly. "Come, Stephen, something good, original or otherwise."

Quite simply, and with a depth of feeling that astonished Robert, Stephen gave a beautiful sonnet of Shakespeare's that touches upon the sea.

Donald would gladly have had the recital stop here, for he felt that they had touched high-water mark, but Robert, whose inability to let go of things at the flood we have already remarked, begged Stephen for one more poem, urging that Donald had given two.

"I would willingly, little Pen," said Stephen, with the

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caressing air that he always threw into the "little Pen," "but really I can't think of any that would be appropriate."

Robert's persistence was more fortunate than common, for a voice from one of the neighboring chairs spoke up quickly. "If you will allow me to act as substitute, I will try to recall a poem that perhaps you and your friends may enjoy." It was a woman's voice, very clear and curiously high-pitched. It seemed to come not from any part of her anatomy, but literally from some region quite above her. It was not only higher than the tones of ordinary conversation, but it seemed to Robert higher than the tones of any conceivable conversation. And yet it pleased. In addition to its musical quality, it spoke of long years of cultivation. It was distinctly artificial, but as distinctly justified by its own excellence. Robert had never heard such a voice, and for the moment was so taken up with its quality that he forgot to make any reply. Stephen spoke for them all: "Thank you very much. We should be delighted if you would."

None of the friends knew precisely which chair had spoken, nor could they be quite sure even later, for the darkness had deepened and wrapped them all in its friendly mantle. Without prelude of any kind, the voice repeated Emerson's lines on the sea-shore, the ones beginning

"I heard or seemed to hear the chiding Sea  
Say, Pilgrim, why so late and slow to come?"

The effect was intangible, remote, impersonal, for the voice never dropped its pitch, never lost its air of coming down to them from above.

Robert was not given to reading poetry, and this was

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a new experience for him. He thanked the voice very genuinely, and begged for still one more selection. The lady said pleasantly, "Yes, if you wish"; and after a moment's pause she added, "Let us take something from Mrs. Browning." She chose "Mother and Poet," the poem ending with the lines :

"Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,  
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.  
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast  
You want a great song for your Italy free,  
Let none look at *me*!"

The effect was even more striking than in the case of Emerson's lines, for now it was a woman who was speaking. The artificial, high-pitched voice easily simulated a mother's grief, and lost itself in a lament that was half sob, half wail. When the recital ended, not only the three friends, but also a chorus of muffled figures expressed their thanks. One woman got up hastily and went inside. When she opened the door of the companionway, and stood for a moment in the blinding light, both Stephen and Robert noticed that she was dressed in black.

By common consent a long silence fell upon the company. Only the swish of the water at the steamer's side and the tramp of the officer on the bridge interrupted the quiet. One by one the company melted away. The Veteran Tar noiselessly folded up the steamer chairs and put the forgotten rugs in neat piles on the long sofa in the companionway. Still the three friends sat on. Robert had got slept up, and remained on deck partly out of pure pleasure in the night, and partly because he wanted to hold back the ending of the voyage just as long as pos-

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sible. Stephen and Donald were busy with their own thoughts. Presently Robert sighed.

"What's up, Pen?" asked Stephen. "Did Sappho make you sniffle over your dead sons, too?"

"No, I was not thinking about Sappho, — if you mean the lady with the remarkable voice. I was thinking how sorry I am to have the voyage end. Don't you wish it could go on forever?"

"Lord, no," answered Stephen, briskly. "It's good enough fun while it lasts, but seven days are enough for me, and I could get on with five. I shall skip down the gang-plank to-morrow without a tear in my throat or a sob in my eye!"

Robert was already feeling homesick for the steamer and a bit afraid of the big, untried world of Europe. He only smiled at Stephen's way of putting it, and went on rather gloomily: "Some people say that the voyage is the best part of a European trip anyway."

"Don't you believe it, little one. 'People' say a lot of things that are n't so! That's all laziness. It's all right as a preface, especially when there are three of you, and Miss Smith and Sappho are along, to say nothing of the Veteran Tar. But it's only a preface, a foretaste, a vestibule, an introduction, a preparation, an antechamber, a prefix, an appetizer —"

"Hold on!" cried Donald. "We catch your meaning. Continue with the thought."

"Well," said Stephen, somewhat out of breath, "I was merely going to say that since the voyage is a necessary part of the business, it is well enough to make the best of it; but it's a sleep and a forgetting, compared to Europe

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itself. Europe is the real thing. To-morrow we shall begin to live!"

Stephen's enthusiasm was contagious, but in spite of it Robert continued to feel skeptical, and especially when he thought of the lonely days after Stephen had gone home, and Donald had settled down to his studies and verse-making in Berlin. It seemed wiser to change the subject, so he asked, "Did you find out which one was Sappho?"

"Not I," answered Stephen. "The voice came from such a bunch of womankind that for the life of me I could n't tell which one perpetrated it. I meant to watch and hear them say good-night to one another, but somehow I did n't. They got off before I knew it."

"And for a very good reason," put in Donald: "it's hard to watch and sleep at the same time."

"Asleep your grandmother," retorted Stephen. "I did n't take so much as forty winks."

"Perhaps not; but at any rate you snored!"

"Snored!" cried Stephen. "How horrible! How unmannerly to snore in the presence of Sappho! I should rather have slept!"

"Don't be disturbed," continued Donald. "She'd probably gone before you got really tuned up."

"For this bit of comfort, I thank you!" replied Stephen, with mock humility. "My self-respect is saved."

"It was a beautiful voice," said Robert.

"It was more than that," cried Donald. "It was *distinguished*."

"Don't you know anything about her?" persisted Robert, turning to Stephen. "I thought you lawyers knew everything."

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"We do. You are quite right, little innocent. We do. We know everything and everybody and every place. If I were on the stand, now, I should say as a pretty sure guess that Sappho is from Boston, for no woman from any other place on earth *could* have such a voice. In the second place, that she is cultivated up to the last notch and quite regardless of expense. In the third place, that in point of age, she is anywheres between twenty and eighty. But that don't signify, for Boston women *never* grow old. And in the fourth place, that to know her would be, as Somebody-or-Other said about Somebody-or-Other, a liberal education."

"Doubtless Pen will recognize her," suggested Donald.

"Doubtless," repeated Stephen, dryly — "by her voice."

"I shall certainly try," declared Robert; and after a little he added, "I must go downstairs now and pack up. Have you two packed yet?"

"*Certainly* not," answered Stephen, promptly.

"Are n't you going to to-night?"

"*Certainly* not," answered Stephen, in the same voice.

"I *never* pack until the *very* last moment."

"What a miserable way of doing," was Robert's comment, as it would have been his Aunt Matilda Pendexter's; "you might get left."

"Perfectly true," assented Stephen, solemnly. "I *might* get left. But then you people who pack up so far ahead of time always *do* get left. You're mortally sure to want something at the very bottom of your trunk as soon as you get locked and strapped. And aside from this deplorable certainty, you're all unsettled and adrift several hours before you need to be! Take the advice of an old

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traveler, and don't touch a thing until you feel our goodly ship tugging at her anchor alongside of Victoria Pier, Liverpool."

"What it is to travel with a philosopher!" cried Donald.

"And with a poet!" put in Robert.

"And with little Pen!" added Stephen, rising and pulling both men out of their chairs, and marching them off to bed.

Whereupon the Veteran Tar performed his final functions in disposing of chairs and rugs, and went off to the fo'castle, chuckling, but whether with his passengers, or at them, it would be difficult to say.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PASS OF LLANBERIS

It may have been the dull day, or his regret at leaving the steamer, or it may have been that Liverpool is really not a beautiful place, but for some reason Robert's first impressions of Europe were distinctly, even sadly, disappointing. In spite of Stephen's radical theories about packing, Robert had all his things in trunk and suit-case very early the next morning, and was up on deck long before the others appeared. He was uncomfortably anxious not to lose anything. With returning health, the active conscience of the Pendexters was beginning to resume its normal functions. It had entire possession of Robert as he paced the upper deck alone in the moist grayness of early morning. Whatever may have been their sins of omission and commission, there was probably not a more conscience-smitten voyager than he among all the hundreds who made up the passengers and crew of the Republic. Had his Aunt Matilda Pendexter been there in the flesh, she could hardly have lashed him more successfully, or more unmercifully.

Robert's main charge against himself was that he had been idle and frivolous ; that he had quite let himself go, in fact, and had been altogether unworthy of his opportunities. He could not honestly accuse himself of any active wrong-doing, but it was the sins of omission that stared him in the face. Robert quite ignored the fact, now that he felt so much stronger, that he was really berating an invalid for not doing the things that a well man might per-



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haps have done to advantage. He thought with genuine self-reproach of all the instructive facts he had meant to gather when he first came on board. He had gathered none of them. He had not been down to see the machinery, or learned how many tons of coal per day the boilers consumed. He had not visited the steerage and talked with the returning emigrants about their experiences in America. He had not been up in the chart-room and learned the details of their particular route. Having originally mistaken the chief steward for the captain, he had never since got straightened out about the ship's officers. He had failed to learn the signal-code, or even the funnels and flags of the different trans-Atlantic lines. He had seen one of the officers fumbling with an instrument that somebody said was a sextant, but he had n't troubled himself to learn how it worked. He could n't have told his Aunt Matilda how many eggs they consumed during the voyage, or how many pounds of butter,—not even whether they carried the chickens alive or in cold storage. These facts would have interested the old lady much more than the Veteran Tar's story.

In fact, as Robert told himself bitterly, he now knew just as much about running a ship as when he first came on board, and that was nothing at all.

It was too late now to redeem himself. In a vain effort to make amends, Robert found himself counting the masts and the smoke-stacks and the life-boats, and indeed everything else in sight whose multiplicity laid it open to the counting process. Where he could not count and measure, he guessed and estimated.

It was while engaged in this informing operation that

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Robert heard a brisk step coming along the deck. He turned in the expectation of seeing either Stephen or Donald. But it was Alicia. She bade him a cheery good-morning, and passed on without any apparent thought of his joining her. Robert had had quite enough of his own company, however, and jumped at this chance of bettering it. With a quickness that would not have been possible to him a week before, he asked if he might not walk with her. Alicia slackened her pace enough for Robert to catch up to her easily. She showed neither pleasure nor annoyance at the company thus thrust upon her. She turned her face toward Robert and said in the cheery, impersonal way that he had come to know, but not to understand, "If you wish to, certainly."

Robert replied rather feebly that he did wish to. Alicia resumed her former pace, and the two were soon walking up and down the deck at a speed which did much to restore Robert's circulation and bowl over his conscience.

Robert had had a number of encounters with Alicia since their introductory games of shuffle-board. These encounters had seemed on the face of them friendly, even intimate, and our young school-girl friends, making their first little journey into the world, had easily and rapidly enmeshed the two in a charming romance. Even Stephen had noticed Robert's evident interest in Alicia, and with characteristic judicial mind had wondered whether it would be *suitable*. But the man and woman pacing the deck together in such a brisk, business-like way were in reality very remote from each other. Robert had not seen as much of Alicia as he wanted to. This was due partly to her

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many occupations, and partly to his own lack of social skill. Just why he wanted to see more of her, it would have been difficult for him to say, for he always came away from such meetings as they had feeling baffled and puzzled, feeling, in fact, that they had not touched on a single point. Sometimes Robert was angry at Alicia, sometimes at himself; but being, like all the Pendexters, uncompromisingly honest, he was commonly angry with himself. He had to acknowledge that while Alicia's world was a totally undiscovered world to him, his own meagre, inexperienced self must spread out before her like an open, unilluminated scroll. And this was the last day of the voyage! Robert had said that he wanted to walk with Alicia, but now that they were really in motion, side by side, he had the same intuition of remoteness, and had nothing to say. It fell to Alicia to begin the talk. She did it in so leisurely a fashion, and so naturally, that Robert had at least the consolation of believing that she had failed to notice his own awkwardness.

Alicia always turned her face brightly toward the person to whom she spoke, even if it were only the Veteran Tar. Stephen said that it was a trick. Donald, on the contrary, maintained that it was the outer and visible sign of an inner and spiritual directness. Robert did not analyze it, but he knew enough to realize that, whether trick or sign, it was wholly impersonal.

Alicia's first remark was the obvious question: "Did I interrupt some pleasant train of thought when I came along and broke in on you?"

Robert's impulse was to assure Alicia that she had not broken in on him, but he refrained, knowing that it would

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only add to the remoteness, and answered the simple truth: "It was n't a pleasant train of thought. I was scolding myself!"

Alicia looked at Robert quickly to see if he were in earnest, and then made rejoinder in the same cheery voice: "Were you really, — that is very unprofitable."

"But you don't know what I was scolding myself about," protested Robert, "or how much I needed it!"

"Nevertheless," replied Alicia, "it is very unprofitable to be scolding any one, even one's self."

"Do you honestly think so?" asked Robert, in surprise. "That is quite different from the Pendexter traditions. You know I lived with my aunt before I went into Boston. She would have said that it was very improving to think over all you'd done during the whole day, every detail of it, you know, and then throw it up to yourself, all the bad and improper things you'd done, — just throw it up to yourself, without making any excuses at all. It's not a comfortable process, I'll own, but it must do you a lot of good."

"Because it's uncomfortable?" asked Alicia, a shade of amusement in her voice.

"Not exactly that," Robert answered; "but so you'll be so ashamed of yourself you won't do it again."

"It seems to me a great waste of time to recall your faults," said Alicia, "and another waste of time to feel sorry for them."

"Probably that's because you have n't any faults to recall or feel sorry for," Robert suggested.

Alicia ignored the remark as completely as if it had never been made, and added impersonally, "I suppose

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it is the difference between the Western and the Eastern point of view."

"The Pendexters are not Westerners," said Robert, quickly; "they have always lived in Massachusetts, that is, since early colonial days."

For a moment Alicia did not follow this abrupt jump. Then she said, a little impatiently: "Oh, I see what you mean. But I didn't mean that. I meant the difference between our Western World, Europe and America, and the Far East, Arabia and Persia and India."

Robert was considerably chagrined at his clumsiness, but reflected that it only added one more to a tolerably long list of similar mistakes. He hurried to ask, "What would you say *is* the difference between the Western and the Eastern point of view?"

Alicia, apparently, made no movement, but Robert was instantly aware that he had made another mistake. This perplexing lady sometimes asked questions herself, — in rather a casual way, it is true, — but though she had of course never put it into words, Robert felt it quite as keenly as if she had shouted it at him, that nothing could have been less to her liking than an interrogative style of conversation. It would have been vastly better if he had simply said, "I think I don't know the Eastern point of view." Then, had she wanted to, she could have enlightened him. Robert saw all this in a flash, but the same kindly intuition which gave him this insight did not go farther and show him why any one should object to the hard-and-fast questioning which forms so prominent an element in the conversational method of New England. At Bolton, Robert's aunts and uncles and cousins fairly

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peppered him with questions, when he went up there on a visit, and his only escape had been the Yankee device of answering one question by another.

Alicia replied, quite without irritation, but more as if she were thinking aloud than talking to any one in particular: "You evidently know the Western point of view, — yours and your aunt's. Our Eastern attitude is different. We believe that one ought not to criticise persons —"

"My aunt would have said that too, though she would n't for worlds have practiced it!" broke in Robert.

"Ah, yes, but you did n't catch the whole spirit of this self-restraint. An Eastern thinker is as courteous to himself as he is to other persons. He does not criticise himself. He makes his mistakes and gains his knowledge. He forgets the one and profits by the other. And so he grows wise. It is the only path!"

"Do you know," said Robert, "that my aunt would have thought such a doctrine simply dreadful, and I'm afraid that I do, too. It leaves no room for repentance. Without that, I don't see how one can grow better."

In his eagerness, Robert's voice had become a trifle excited, and he felt rebuked when Alicia answered, even more quietly than her wont, "It is not a question for argument. It is a matter for feeling, for perception. I should not be willing to defend the oriental point of view in any controversial way. Indeed, I seldom speak of these things. But to be quite fair, I must add that this self-conscious, Western repentance seems to me to be either morbidness, or mere phrasing, and to bear little sound fruit. In the East, on the contrary, repentance is not self-conscious. It

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is not even thought of as meritorious, at least not in India. It is an actual thing, a result made necessary by the larger knowledge that brings the larger vision. Don't you see how such a view of life produces a wholly different breed of man, less petty, less contemptibly conscious of his own faults and virtues, more cosmic, more worthy of love and adoration? For myself, I much prefer an unconscious sinner with his face turned towards Heaven to all your introspective, self-conscious saints glancing fearfully towards Hades!"

Alicia spoke with such quiet intensity that Robert felt his breath taken away and could only say rather feebly, "Oh, do you really feel so?"

"I do, indeed," Alicia answered, smiling at her own heat and at poor Robert's bewilderment. "Only I ought, perhaps, to add, lest you misunderstand me, that in my own view of good and evil, the unconscious, devoted soul, turning by a divine instinct towards the light, is really the saint, and your sickly, self-conscious, morbidly repentant soul, seeing nothing bigger than his own little qualities, is really the sinner!"

Robert did not wholly follow Alicia's thought, but he felt that she had been at some pains to present a new point of view, and had been genuinely kind, so he said with a simplicity which always showed him at his best, "Thank you many times. I shall think over what you have said."

"Do," answered Alicia, with equal sincerity.

The bugle sounded for breakfast while Alicia was speaking, so she added, "This is quite dreadful, to have discussed such great matters before breakfast, before one's

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coffee, but perhaps it's better to have done it audibly than merely to have scolded one's self."

Robert laughed, and followed Alicia towards the companionway. When they reached the door, Alicia, by some impulse which rather puzzled her afterwards, held out her hand to Robert. "Good-by," she said, somewhat less impersonally than her custom; "I shall hardly be seeing you again."

"Not on the steamer, I'm afraid," Robert answered, "but I hope some time on land." He was going to ask her address, but the current of hungry deck-trotters had already swept her out of hearing, and all he got was a smile and a nod.

As Robert made his way towards his own table, he reflected that he did not even know Miss Smith's right name, and he doubted, with a little feeling of dismay, whether after all they could ever have been friends, for they seemed to live in such totally different worlds.

It was about ten when the Republic made her pier, and the gang-plank completed the connection between America and Europe. Donald had followed Stephen's advice so literally that he was not yet packed up, and his two friends had to wait for him on the upper deck. Stephen, in spite of his contrary theories, was orderliness itself. By some happy faculty he always wore precisely the right thing, and all his belongings fell into precisely the right sort of receptacles. To Robert these belongings seemed troublesomely multitudinous, — a trunk, a hat-box, a suit-case, a toilet bag, a shawl-strap, an umbrella, a cane, — but he had to confess that each was perfect of its kind. He knew, too, from his frequent visits to his friend's state-room, that



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inside these several receptacles were numerous miniature bags and cases for all sorts of toilet articles, collars and cuffs, handkerchiefs, gloves, patent leather shoes, and also that inside Stephen's pockets was a similar array of card-cases, wallets, silver match-boxes, cigarette cases, and the like. Robert had never known any one quite so completely fitted out. It made his own outfit seem more than modest. As Robert could not associate this completeness with any plentiful supply of money, he put it down, in Stephen's case, as the orderly attitude of the legal mind.

Donald's luggage was equally characteristic. It consisted of one small steamer trunk, which showed unmistakable signs of decrepitude from having habitually had to carry much more than it was intended to carry. It bulged, top, bottom, and sides. Donald's present difficulty was not due to any over-nicety in his ideas of packing, but solely to his inability to get all his possessions into the one small trunk and still fasten the lock. In despair, he had tumbled everything out on the floor, and started all over again. It was at this juncture that Stephen joined Robert on the upper deck. They stood watching the other passengers as they crowded down the gang-plank and fluttered about the pier. Robert was too much interested to feel any impatience at their own delay. He scanned the faces eagerly.

"Well," said Stephen, "are you able to pick her out?"

"No; I don't see anything of her."

"See!" echoed Stephen. "It's not a question of seeing, but of hearing. We are evidently thinking of different people. I don't mean Miss Smith, I mean Sappho."

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Robert chose to ignore the thrust and said simply, "I don't think we shall see either of them again."

"As one of them we can't be said to have seen at all yet, your language lacks accuracy."

"Quite right," admitted Robert; "but be merciful. We haven't all been to the Law School."

"By Jove, that's so," answered Stephen, as if the remark were sufficiently novel to deserve attention, "and mighty lucky it is for the legal pocket-book. Do you know, little Pen, that law is getting to be more and more a question of English, and less and less a question of statutes?"

At last Donald joined them, and announced that the feat had been accomplished, and that his trunk was on its way to the customs.

Stephen groaned, and asked if that meant the necessity for another feat.

"No," said Donald, blandly, "I tied a rope around my poor little trunk, tied it very elaborately, you know, and I'll look so innocent that the customs gentles will never have the heart to ask me to untie it."

"If that's your little game, you'd better get Pen to work it. That feat of yours, by the way, is too time-consuming to be repeated. Do you know what we shall do, my hearties, when our feet first touch British soil?"

"We shall fall on our knees," cried Donald, dramatically, "and kiss the dirt of the beloved mother country!"

"We shall do nothing of the sort, unless we strike a banana skin," Stephen declared emphatically, "and it won't be necessary. The dirt will kiss you, especially the smoke. No, my children, like good Americans, we shall

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first go shopping. Being proud and stylish, we will buy a kit for the poet, a kit big enough to hold the overflow and enable us *occasionally* to make the train we started out for ! ”

It was not such a bad plan, for Liverpool has little to offer beyond the trains for getting away. Robert felt the plan to be rather frivolous, but on the whole pleasurable, especially as he did not have the agony of the selection. Donald was for taking the first kit they saw, but Stephen was fastidious, and dragged them around to at least half a dozen shops before he allowed a purchase. Even then, he looked at the ungainly kit so ruefully that Donald, quite ignoring the fact that the ungainliness was to be his own possession, began humming, “ Alas, poor kitty, lend her your pity. She had reached seven, and never called pretty.”

In the early afternoon, when they found themselves down at Chester, Robert’s enthusiasm quite returned. It was his first glimpse of a walled town and of an English cathedral. Even the gloomy Grosvenor Inn, tucked away under its shadowing arcade, came in for his approval. Before dinner, the three friends had gone the complete round of the walls, up and down, around towers, over arched gates, across the gaps, and had done the cathedral so thoroughly that even Robert was satisfied. His Aunt Matilda Pendexter could have found no fault with him. He had traced every architectural period, Early English, Perpendicular, Debased Gothic, and as far as the fact-loving Baedeker could inform him, knew every date connected with the building.

It is easy to grow enthusiastic over Chester. In the first

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place, it is really quaint and beautiful. In the second place, one commonly goes there from Liverpool. In addition to this, the sun was shining bravely on this particular afternoon, and Robert saw town, walls, and cathedral in the late afternoon light. The long, slanting shadows lent a touch of mystery, and the penetrating sunbeams brought out all the warmth in the old red sandstone, and all the coolness in the abundant greenery.

Robert's heart sang within him. This was the Europe that he had dreamed about! He wondered why he had regretted leaving the steamer. He did not know that in all the world there is no walk quite so delightful as the first real walk one takes after a long voyage.

Stephen had been in Chester before. He enjoyed it in his own thorough, quiet way, but most of all he enjoyed seeing Robert and Donald enjoy it: Robert in his conscientious, New England fashion, over-regardful of detail and statistics, Donald with a poet's sensuous indifference to all but general and striking impressions. Stephen, as the most experienced traveler, made the plans. It was Friday evening, and thinking that a quiet Sunday would be good for his two friends, he had arranged to remain in Chester until Monday and then go north to the Lake District. Donald, in his lazy, happy-go-lucky way, was entirely acquiescent. But Robert, the erstwhile invalid, was now the alert, intelligent tourist, bent on seeing everything that was to be seen. By the help of his inseparable guide-book, he had discovered how near they were to the glories of North Wales. With a sagacity that quite astonished Stephen, Robert drew up a complete plan, showing how they could make a rapid descent upon Wales, capture two

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days of the best Welsh scenery, and still start for Windermere on Monday afternoon. It was eminently characteristic that what pleased Robert most in the proposed expedition was the fact that it would be so much extra, an out-and-out gift of the gods, and could be had without cutting anything else out. Stephen called this Yankee-like, and Donald said it was thrifty beyond belief, but no amount of friendly ridicule could lessen Robert's satisfaction.

So it happened that Saturday found the three friends making their way westward as fast as the afternoon express would carry them, along the rocky coast to the wild headlands that overlook Anglesea, and then, with a wide sweep to the south and east, up to Llanberis. It was five o'clock when they reached the little hamlet and started on foot up the six-mile road that leads to the Pass. The sense of being in a foreign country was greatly heightened by the strange Welsh language that now met them on all sides. The Welsh Sunday began at sundown, and as it was the time of the great religious revival which recently swept over Wales, the spectacle of three young men tramping so manifestly for pleasure called forth looks and even words of disapproval.

The road soon emerged from the village and skirted the gigantic stone quarries which bring profit and ugliness to the lower part of the valley. In time these, too, were passed. The narrow, grayish ribbon of road wound up and up through the stony, unfertile Pass until it lost itself against the sky between the sombre outlines of the dark masses of mountain. Robert had seen beautiful scenery at home, but none that seemed so near and intimate as this,

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so much a part of himself. As the friends mounted higher, the sunset glories grew more and more masterful. The earth melted into a gray monochrome, and the sky was everything. When occasionally they turned and looked back of them, they caught glimpses of a shimmering island, and beyond it, of the western sea.

There was little talking. Each, in his own way, walked alone with Nature.

It was almost dark when they reached the summit of the Pass. At the very top, just where the road spills over to the east, they found a picturesque white-walled inn. Robert had never seen an inn that he liked quite so much. It was so high up, at the very crest of the Pass, and yet it nestled low against the earth, the picture of homely comfort. He liked the name, too, Gorphwysfa Inn, for it suggested new and unknown worlds. It was the sort of a place where one might expect something to happen. The friends pushed open the door and walked in. They found themselves in a low hall, now quite deserted, but amazingly comfortable-looking. A fire of sea coals blazed and sputtered on the hearth. They could see the outlines of vacant chairs, while from various parts of the room, from tables, walls, and mantel-shelf, came the glimmer of highly burnished copper. Robert and Donald gave exclamations of delight, and even the undemonstrative Stephen allowed himself a grunt of satisfaction.

"I wonder where all the people are," said Robert.

"Did you cross on a British steamer, or did you not?" asked Donald, with assumed severity.

"I certainly did."

"And don't you know where the people are?"

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“No,” answered Robert, wondering if he were hopelessly stupid.

“At this sacred hour,” said Donald, oracularly, “every mother’s son of them has a little tin pitcher marked ‘Hot Water’ before him, and is dressing for that solemn occasion known as dinner.”

Stephen, meanwhile, had been investigating the darker corners of the hall in the hope of establishing communications with the proprietor. He stumbled, and almost fell, over a motley collection of shoes, at least a score of pairs stretched out in a double row. “Do you see those shoes?” he demanded, as he recovered his balance.

“Some of them,” said Robert, peering into the gloom. “How funny! Do you suppose we’ve got into a shoe-maker’s shop?”

“Worse than that, little Pen. Far worse than that!”

“A lunatic asylum?” Donald proposed cheerfully.

“Still worse, sonny. Those shoes — mark my words! — mean that the inn is full, and that there are no beds for the gallant Americans.”

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” exclaimed Robert and Donald in concert, for this possibility had never occurred to them.

Their exclamations brought a housemaid from what appeared to be a luminous hole in the wall, but which was in reality merely a door leading into the lighted tap-room; and she in turn brought a brisk little woman heralded as the proprietress of the establishment.

Stephen’s surmise was dismally accurate, — not a vacant room remained. He got some satisfaction out of it, as a triumph of sound inductive reasoning, but the others failed to share it.

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There was one room with two beds in it, the licensed victualer finally remembered, a room that two gentlemen had written for early in the week. She was only to keep it for them until eight o'clock. The Americans might have dinner if they liked, and see if the other gentlemen turned up.

Robert was minded to ask what would happen to *them* if the others *did* turn up, for the point seemed to him important, but Stephen discreetly headed him off by promptly accepting the offer. "If we have dinner here," he confided to the others, "it will be one point gained, and it will be up to the bright-eyed licensed victualer to make some provision for us. Also, my hearties, if we *don't* have dinner here, where *will* we have it?"

The three friends sat down rather disconsolately, some of the cheeriness of the room having subtly melted away. As became guests whose welcome was not yet assured, they sat in the gloom surrounding the walls, and left the easy chairs in front of the fire for those who had a better right to them. It might be added that the conversation was not very lively.

Presently another luminous hole appeared in a distant corner of the room, — this time an opened door into what seemed to be a private parlor. A young woman in a pretty dinner-gown made her way over the rows of shoes, and took one of the chairs in front of the fire. She was followed by a small boy of thirteen or fourteen, who seemed mostly legs and arms, but as he came nearer the fire he showed a bright little face, with a freckled snub nose and a pair of eyes that fairly danced. He also was dressed for dinner. He wore an Eton jacket and broad linen collar,



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but they did not disguise the fact that he was an American. As the young woman sat down, she said, without looking around, "Billy, do tell father to stop reading and come and enjoy the fire."

Billy skipped back into the parlor to deliver her message.

Meanwhile our three young friends had risen, and remained standing until the young woman had seated herself. Then they all sat down. The young woman had not seen them as she entered the hall, her whole attention being given to the fire. The slight noise attracted her notice. She looked up quickly and caught sight of Stephen sitting in the gloom on one side of the fireplace. She glanced over at the other side, and saw Donald; then a little further, and saw Robert. With a droll motion of her head, she turned quite around to see if there were any more men. She had thought the room empty, but strange young men seemed appearing on all sides.

Robert laughed a quiet little boyish laugh that would have been reassuring, had the young woman been frightened. "No," he said, in answer to her inquiring look, "there are no more of us, — just the three. I hope we did n't startle you."

"Not at all," she answered calmly. "I was only surprised. But where did you all come from?"

As her glance took in Stephen last, he answered quickly, "That depends on how much time your question covers. We came from Llanberis Village, or from Chester, or from Liverpool, or from Boston, — just as you please."

"I knew you were Americans. But how did you get here?"

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"We walked," answered Donald, as the young woman's glance happened to turn in his direction. "We walked eighteen miles from Llanberis Village, our heads in the sunset, our feet on a grayish white wriggly thing that seemed to crawl up the Pass like a great serpent."

Billy had now returned from his errand, and was staring, open-mouthed, at the strangers. "But it's only six miles to Llanberis," he burst in. "Pauline and I walked there this afternoon, and back again, too."

"True," said Donald, gravely, "but you seem to have forgotten your arithmetic, Billy. There were three of us, so that made eighteen."

"Humph," answered Billy; "that's an Irish way of counting!"

Pauline ignored this tangle of dimensions and said to no one in particular, "Isn't this the dearest place? We've been here a week, and I should like to stay indefinitely, but we've promised Billy to take him to the Lakes before he goes back to school."

"It's quaint enough, all right," Stephen answered; "but whether we like it or not will depend upon circumstances."

"Upon circumstances?" repeated Pauline. "Do you mean your dinner? That will be good. Or do you mean the weather to-morrow? That will be cloudy. Billy and I are going to the top of Snowdon, though. Whatever comes, we're bound to say good-by to it, rain or shine."

"Neither the dinner nor the weather troubles *us*," answered Stephen; "our happiness depends upon whether we get any beds to sleep on. Your fair licensed victualer does n't know yet whether she can keep us overnight."

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“And won’t know until eight o’clock,” put in Robert.

Pauline turned to her brother. “Do you hear that, Billy? These men have no place to sleep. I’ve said all along that we are taking more room than our share. You must sleep in the parlor and let these men have your room.” She turned to our three young friends and explained: “It has a double bed in it, and a sofa, so perhaps you can manage.”

The friends protested that they could not think of such an intrusion, but Pauline disposed of their objections without so much as considering them. She turned once more to her small brother. “Is your room in order, Billy?” — Billy nodded — “then take these men in at once. They may want to get ready for dinner.”

Billy proved a willing host. He was on his feet in an instant, but before he led the way, he turned to Donald and said slyly, “It’s a long distance to my room, you know, — awful long distance.”

“Is it?” asked Donald, in surprise. “The inn looked small enough from the outside.”

“But there are four of us to go it, you know. Remember your arithmetic!” and Billy shouted with laughter.

“Don’t be so pert, Billy,” said Pauline. But Donald protested that he had brought it on himself.

Our three young friends had very little material with which to improve their appearance, but when at last they came out to dinner, with their glowing faces, carefully arranged hair, fresh collars and neckties, and thoroughly brushed clothes, they looked very fit, in spite of the absence of dinner-coats. The other guests had already assembled. The Marshalls sat at the long centre table, Pauline at the

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end, with Billy on her left, and Mr. Marshall next to Billy. The three places on her right had been reserved for the Americans. Stephen arranged the seating quite unselfishly, placing Robert next to Pauline, then Donald, and then himself. Pauline presented them collectively to her father, and each man in bowing supplied his own name, — “Mr. Pendexter” — “Donald Fergusson” — “Morse,” — and each did it characteristically.

The British guests looked somewhat shocked at this rapid familiarity; that is, all except a few who had been out in India and the colonies.

Billy was grinning from ear to ear, and, with the horrible tenacity which small boys show for any pleasantry that they clearly comprehend, remarked, as soon as they were seated, “It was n’t so far to the dining-room as it was to my room, was it? Only three fourths of the way!”

Donald looked as if he would let small boys severely alone in the future, but Stephen headed off any further arithmetic by saying that it is always a short distance to the dining-room, when one is hungry.

“Pauline likes Americans,” remarked Billy.

“Certainly I do,” answered Pauline, without the least shade of embarrassment. “You do, too.”

Meanwhile Robert was meeting an experience, perhaps the one foreshadowed when he entered the inn. His encounter with Pauline in the firelight had put them at once upon the friendliest terms, but until now he had not really seen her. And what he saw produced upon him a novel impression. Robert had a well-developed dislike for women in general. His cousins at Bolton, nice as they were, frankly bored him. The women who passed in and out at

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Pineckney Street were commonly either plain or coquettish. They belonged unmistakably to his own class. They were the sort of women whom junior clerks in the spice trade most commonly meet and most commonly marry. But instead of arousing any desire on Robert's part, they had filled him with an aversion which he easily transferred to women as a whole. He had reached thirty-four without the slightest shadow of a love affair. He even failed to understand the remark when Donald assured him quite seriously that he ought to be heartily ashamed of himself to confess to such a deplorable lack of temperament.

Robert belonged to that rather large company of persons whose circumstances place them in one social group, while an ill-defined undercurrent of instincts and intuitions keeps them forever aliens in their own class. Such persons are peculiarly open to that half-conversion and half-transference to another class which constitute one of the hopeful tragedies of life.

Robert was a thorough-going old bachelor. Old bachelors are supposed, by their women friends at least, to possess a fund of sentimentality hidden away somewhere in their nature, which needs only to be touched by the right person to manifest itself either sublimely or ridiculously. But Robert was as devoid of sentimentality as any human being well could be. The nearest approach to a romance in the whole of his prosaic life was his growing affection for Stephen, and that had been called out solely by Stephen's outspoken liking for him. Robert's interest in Alicia was devoid of even the color of romance. Could they have understood it, those young

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school-girls on the steamer, making their first little journey into the world, they would have been quite bowled over with disappointment at the failure of romance to touch the whole of life. Robert had never felt so keen an interest in any woman as he had in Alicia, but it was not in Alicia as a woman, as a possible object of love, hardly even of friendship. It was wholly because some blind instinct — completely as he failed to understand Alicia — told him that her way of life was different from his own, and immeasurably better. A keen spiritual hunger made him reach out to Alicia as the guardian of an inner light, which, if he too could only see, would also be a guide to him.

In meeting Pauline, Robert met a woman for whom he was quite unprepared. She belonged to a type wholly unknown to him. It was not that Pauline was remarkable, unless it is remarkable to be free from all those qualities and affectations which in the Pinckney Street women offended so sensitive a person as Robert. Pauline was unspoiled, just a healthy, natural, American girl in the early twenties. She was as little self-conscious as Billy himself, and quite devoid of any desire to attract men or repel them. It would sound odd to speak of Pauline's beauty. What she possessed would better be described as good looks, much the same sort of good looks that healthy outdoor boys have. To-night Pauline's good looks were at their best. She was dressed in a simple cashmere gown of light lavender, with a touch of embroidery of a somewhat darker shade. The sleeves extended only to the elbows, while the waist of the gown ended above in a circular, embroidered ruffle at a sufficient distance below the throat

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to allow the strong neck and head to rise out of it like some sturdy flower. Pauline's hair was drawn back from her temples in a loose curve, and gathered into the simplest possible coil at the back of her head. She wore no jewelry of any kind.

Pauline had finished her soup, and sat with both hands resting idly on the table.

As Robert sat down, he took in all the simple details of this new type of woman in one long, inclusive glance. And then something happened to him. He felt confused and awkward, even ashamed. Never before had he wanted to touch a woman, but now, as he drew up his chair to the table, a swift, imperious desire came over him to seize the strong, shapely hand lying there before him and to cover it with kisses. The color flew into his face, for it seemed to him that Pauline must know, and that such a feeling on his part was a great liberty, in fact distinctly improper. In the firelit hall, he had been wholly unembarrassed, had been the first to speak, indeed, but now he found it almost impossible to say a word. As the occupant of the seat of honor, at Pauline's right hand, he felt that he must at least make the effort, and also that the remark, whatever it might be, must be addressed to her. He said rather lamely, "How did you know that we were Americans?"

The remark proved happier than he could have hoped, for Stephen at once joined in: "That's what I want to know, too. We had n't spoken. Our English friends always say that our voices give us away; that we speak through our noses. And you could n't have really seen us, coming as you did from such a light room into

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such a dark one. How *did* you know, or was it only a guess?"

"No, it was n't a guess," said Pauline, answering both men at once, and openly pleased to be surrounded once more with her compatriots. "I really knew, honor bright. How did I know? Let me see. Oh, I remember. It was because you all stood up."

"But you did n't see us, or even hear us," persisted Stephen. "You only heard us sit down."

Pauline laughed as unaffectedly as Billy himself. "I would have been a stupid, would I not, if I had n't known that you must have stood up together, if you all flopped down together? You could hardly have been standing up against the wall when Billy and I came in. It would have been too silly!"

"That's good inductive reasoning, all right," Stephen replied, so lightly that it did not sound patronizing.

"Would n't Englishmen have stood up?" asked Robert, with real interest.

"Oh, dear, no," Pauline answered; "not even if they had been sitting in front of the fire."

"They're an unmannerly set of beggars," announced Donald, unconcernedly, quite unconscious that at least four of the nationality under discussion were looking at him with raised eyebrows. "It's a wonder that they don't learn some manners, when so many Americans come over here every year."

"But they're really not unmannerly, you know," Pauline said hurriedly. "It's only that they have a different standard. Englishmen always do what I don't expect them to do, and generally fail to do what I expect. My



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father says it's only the difference in the national standard."

"Oh, I see," said Donald, composedly. "It's the key that one needs. I'll suggest it to Mr. Baedeker. He might publish it in his guide-book right after the table of money, — Key to English Manners. It would strengthen the Anglo-American alliance immensely."

"Turn about is only fair play," suggested Stephen. "I fancy they would have to put in our own guide-books a key to American manners"; and then he added, solely for the purpose of getting the poet on safer ground, "Did I understand you to say, Miss Marshall, that you know the country hereabouts? Perhaps you can advise us on the Snowdon trip."

Meanwhile the two strange gentlemen had arrived, and the indebtedness of our three young friends to Pauline was complete and absolute. The licensed victualer was cutting up cold joints at a side table. This, in fact, was her usual occupation. She was rather pleased than otherwise that these troublesome, outspoken young gentlemen would have to move on. When she learned that the Marshalls had arranged to take them in, she could offer no objection, for a family that engages four rooms for three persons and does n't scrutinize the extras is not to be lightly offended.

The other guests seemed very much afraid of getting acquainted with one another, and went to their rooms directly after dinner. This left the big hall, with its cheery fire and glimmering copper, wholly to the Americans. Billy fastened himself to Donald, and insisted that they two should sit on the settle. In spite of his dinner reso-

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lution, it ended by Donald's giving up his whole evening to Billy. The little fellow snuggled up to him comfortably and listened to one story after another. Robert had wondered how Donald could ever be a good teacher, — he was such a careless, happy-go-lucky fellow. When he saw him with Billy, he understood.

The others sat in a group before the fire. Stephen and Pauline did most of the talking, Mr. Marshall throwing in an occasional word. Poor Robert was fast losing the power of speech. He sat where he could watch Pauline. He felt that he ought not to do it, that it was a perfectly shameless thing to do, but nothing short of a bandage over his eyes could have kept him from it. No one seemed to notice it, Pauline least of all. Before they separated for the night, it was arranged that the next day Pauline and Billy should take the three friends to the top of Snowdon. Mr. Marshall said that he would see them well on their way, but would hardly go to the top.

Robert did not sleep as well that night as he had been sleeping on the Republic. Like all people who open their eyes more than once during the night, he fancied that he had not slept at all.

## CHAPTER V

### IN THE CLOUDS

PAULINE'S prediction came true. On Sunday, Snowdon was under a heavy cap of cloud. At times this mantle swept down the sides of the mountain in giant folds that completely surrounded the little inn. At other moments varying currents of air tossed the clouds aside and sent them in great billows down the Pass of Llanberis, permitting an outlook towards Capel Curig. Then the clouds would surge back again, engulfing the inn in one vague sea of grayness. A few moments later, the deluge of cloud would spill over to the eastward, and allow a momentary glimpse of the narrow, snake-like road that leads down the Pass towards the sea.

Robert was quite miserable with apprehension, and ashamed that he should be miserable. He knew Stephen too well to believe that any amount of cloud would keep him from attempting the ascent; and he knew himself too well to believe that he would brave the ridicule and obvious interpretation, should he himself remain at the inn. It did not occur to him for a moment that Mr. Marshall would allow Pauline and Billy to venture up the mountain on such a day, and especially as they had both been on the top twice during the past week. But Robert did not know the temper of the Marshall family, or the way that perfect health makes light of obstacles. Pauline came to breakfast evidently equipped for the enterprise, and wholly free from any doubts in regard to her day's plan. Even

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Mr. Marshall had on knickerbockers. Billy was always in walking attire.

Robert felt a thrill of admiration, not only for Pauline, but for the whole family. In his old world at Bolton, both the men and the women, but especially the women, were easily deterred from carrying out their plans by even trivial obstacles. It had always been a heart-rending matter to get his aunt off to Boston. She usually planned to go on a Monday, — that being bargain day at the department stores. But the household were happy indeed if they got her off by Wednesday or Thursday. Taking his cue from the people around him, Robert had always allowed circumstances to triumph over the human will. None of his own plans were made with any degree of assurance. There was always a large peradventure in them, due in part to the habit of his class, and in part to his own lack of robust health. Robert felt the difference between himself and the Marshalls, just as he had felt the difference between himself and Alicia. But as yet it had not occurred to him that he could close the gap. The present result was a sense of confusion and a distinct feeling of inferiority. It was perhaps the secret of Robert's great admiration for Stephen that Stephen belonged to this dominant class, and allowed circumstances to interfere with his plans only when he was absolutely forced to do so. When this happened, Stephen never complained. He accepted the inevitable with much better grace than Robert did. Stephen exercised his will when there was a chance for success; Robert exercised his when there was no chance. This one difference in quality meant a tremendous difference in the daily working out of their characters. Stephen's fondness for Robert

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was partly due to Robert's rare innocence and loveliness, but partly also to his weakness. Stephen's instinct as a lawyer was the higher one of protecting and defending. His single-minded devotion to the law was due in large measure to his apprehension of law as an instrument of right. Earlier in the centuries Stephen would have been a crusader or a knight-errant. Fallen upon the present, he was a lawyer. Without analyzing his feeling, he was conscious all the time of a desire to protect Robert, — to shield him. What he wanted to protect and shield him against, he never got so far as to say. Had he done so, he would perhaps have been the first to recognize its hopelessness, for in effect what he wanted to do was to protect Robert from his own past, to shield him from his heredity, and that the gods themselves could hardly have done.

But Robert's frame of mind as he came down to breakfast at Gorphwysfa Inn was far from analytic. When he found Pauline dressed for the expedition, his immediate sense was one of relief. This soon melted into a lively sense of pleasure. Pauline seemed charged with health and good spirits, and radiated them in all directions with the utmost unconsciousness and impartiality. If Robert and Billy got more than their share, it was due solely to their nearness to the source, and to the operation of what Stephen humorously called the law of inverse squares. The gentleman who had chafed under Donald's remarks the preceding evening did not appear at the breakfast-table. Donald was amiability itself. He liked gray days. The prospect of five or six hours' walk in the clouds filled him with elation. This morning he was wholly the poet, and would not have quarreled with any number of British Philistines.

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The party got started about ten. Billy took complete possession of Donald. But it was easy to metamorphose Billy into a sprite of the mist and fit him into the mood. It would have been impossible magic to make Billy serve as a cloud angel, for the freckled, snub-nosed little face, with its dancing, unquenchable eyes, was far too mischievous for any angelic rôle, and made him a much better model for imp or sprite. Billy circled around the party, never completely lost in the mist, but putting on various grades of unreality as the indistinctness varied. But the centre of his orbit remained Donald. Mr. Marshall went with them on the lower trail as far as the old copper works, and along the desolate causeway that skirts the tarn. When the trail turned to the right, and shot up with amazing perpendicularity into the heart of the clouds, Mr. Marshall turned back. Occupied as he was with his own unaccustomed thoughts and feelings, Robert still had room for surprise at Mr. Marshall's matter-of-fact leave-taking. Robert had never known a father who would have allowed his children to go on such an expedition in such weather, much less have seen them off with this delightful absence of precautions. Mr. Marshall burdened them with no warnings against either precipices or colds. He took the success of the expedition as a foregone conclusion, and told them good-by with the same light-heartedness that he would have wished them good-night. All he said was, "Keep your head, Pauline. Look after Billy."

The young people stood for a minute watching the retreating figure ; but it was soon lost in the mist. They themselves had climbed but a few feet, but they seemed hanging in mid-air, against the sides of almost perpen-

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dicular rock. Billy and Donald constituted an advance party, whose company was too intermittent to count for much. This reduced the party of major interest to three, Pauline, Robert, and Stephen. The girl was by all odds the best mountaineer of the three. Robert and Stephen had started out with the amiable intention of being very helpful to Pauline, and of showing her their high appreciation of the honor she had done them in intrusting herself to their care. It soon became evident, however, that Pauline needed no such help. Far from leaning on any one, she had wisely intrusted herself to her own superb care.

Both men realized at the same moment the futility of their good intentions, and laughed aloud. Pauline laughed too, for even without knowing what had gone before, the scene was amusing in itself. Pauline stood some distance above them, unfatigued and unpalpitating, waiting for her two knights to catch their breath and come up to her. Stephen's tendency to weight made rapid climbing quite out of the question, and even moderate climbing attended with some puffing and blowing. Robert was all right as to wind, but Doane Street had given little exercise to the muscles used in mountain climbing. Though he would not have confessed it for worlds, he had continued and very serious doubts as to whether he should ever be able to reach the top. Pauline made no comment. It was not so much any conscious reasoning as an instinct of courtesy that made her slacken her pace, and quite unostentatiously ignore their disabilities. She excused her own superior facility by explaining that she and Billy had practically spent the whole summer climbing among the Scotch mountains. Even with these concessions, it was a very hard

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climb for both men. In spite of their good company, they were audibly relieved when their own precipitous trail joined the broader path from Llanberis village, and they could travel at a less palpitating grade along the sharp ridge that led to the summit. They rounded the tiny railway shed and the half frightened looking little hotel, and came out on the rocky platform which constitutes the highest point in England and Wales.

Billy and Donald were already in possession, Billy flat on his stomach, peering over the edge into the shimmering abyss, Donald hugging his knees and rocking to and fro in an ecstasy of delight. Pauline quickly dropped alongside of Billy, settling herself in comfortable tailor fashion, her hands in her lap. Robert and Stephen disposed of themselves much more slowly and less gracefully. Looking at the group, one would have said that there were three children of nature and two outsiders.

The top of Snowdon was in the sunlight, but all around them stretched an almost unbroken mass of white cloud, with here and there the black summit of some ambitious peak emerging like a tiny island. The billows of this vast cloud ocean were more enormous and more fantastic than any into which even tropical cyclone had ever been able to lash the heavier sea. These great sun-flecked billows surged about them with an elemental force that threatened either to annihilate them, or to turn them into gods. Donald was visibly exultant, Billy curious, Pauline and Stephen quiescent, and Robert alternately elated and overawed.

For a time none of them spoke, Pauline, Donald, and Billy because it did not occur to them; Stephen and



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Robert because they felt that any comment would be an interruption.

Stephen was the first to speak. "By Jove, little Pen, this *is* mighty fine, is n't it? I don't know what's under all this whipped cream, and I don't much care. It's good fun just as it is."

"All the same," piped up Billy, "I wish it would dry up and blow away, for it's nicer when you see over to Ireland!"

"Peace, earth-born spirit," commanded Donald, partly in earnest and partly in fun; "why wish for earth when you already have Heaven? There's only one thing that could beat this, and that would be a jolly big storm, thunder and lightning, wind blowing great guns, drenching rain, rocks aquiver, all nature cowed and trembling, and only man open-eyed and unafraid!"

Billy edged up a little closer to his strange friend. He did not quite understand this heroic mood, but he liked Donald the better for it.

Pauline had listened, and seemed to be weighing the situation. She glanced around the complete sweep of the horizon and said presently, "This is all you will get to-day — just clouds. It's all right for Billy and me, for we had the view when we were here before. I am sorry for you, though. I do wish you could see both. It's not much to see Ireland, for it's too far off, just a faint blue line against the sky. But the near view is worth while, — mountains, valleys, coast, — you could almost fancy you were up in a balloon."

Robert was torn between conflicting emotions. He would have been perfectly happy in any event, for he

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cared more for the foreground than for any possible scenery that might lie beyond. But the Pendexter thrift made him feel that after coming so far and climbing so high, he ought to get more than just clouds. At Bolton the expedition would be regarded as a failure.

Meanwhile the clouds took on a grayish tinge. The mountain-climbers began to be conscious that instead of looking at the clouds, they were looking through them. The sun paled and went out like a snuffed candle. They found themselves sitting on dull gray rocks in a moist gray mist, and realized that it was time to go home.

Billy announced that he meant to go very fast, for he was devoured with hunger. Robert was rather surprised that any one should be hungry at such a time, and still more surprised when Pauline agreed with Billy. But the fact did not strike him as ominous.

Whatever Pauline said seemed wonderful to Robert, but equally wonderful were her unembarrassed silences. Robert was not yet accustomed to this easier and more natural world in which people talked or refrained from talking without any feeling of constraint. In his own world it was not considered manners to allow the flow of conversation a moment's rest. Talk was treated like a ball, which must be kept forever tossing from one to another. Other things being equal, the most vigorous player was counted the greatest social success. Robert was too shy always to live up to this exacting theory, but at least he knew his duty. Whenever a conversational breach occurred, he was to jump into the breach.

To take people simply, to be just one's natural, serene self in company, or at home, or quite alone, was a social

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conception too little strenuous to satisfy the Pendexter conscience. As a result, social intercourse, instead of being a welcome element in daily life, like walking or eating or reading, was so pronounced a strain that even the strongest members of the family could not sustain it for any great length of time. Whatever the occasion, the Pendexters were always in dress uniform and on parade.

But here was a distinctly new way of handling the matter. Pauline was never in dress uniform and never on parade. She would have worn exactly what she had on, and done exactly what she was doing, and said practically exactly what she was saying, had our three young friends been at the Antipodes, and Billy her only companion. Stephen regarded this simplicity of Pauline's as merely natural breeding, but was too much accustomed to it to wonder, and much too well informed to regard it as unique and individual. To Robert, however, Pauline was not a type. She was a wonderful individual, a woman whose unique quality entitled her to worship. Consequently Robert worshiped, and with an intensity of devotion of which in Doane Street or Pinckney Street he would never have believed himself capable.

The mist and darkness deepened as the descent progressed. It became difficult to follow the trail, especially when they struck off to the left and skirted the desolate tarn, on the high ridge separating it from the Pass. Pauline showed no alarm, not even when they got off the trail altogether and wasted considerable time in finding it again. The only sign she gave of sensing any possible danger was in telling Billy to keep within sight. Robert's regard for the small boy went up considerably when he observed that

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Billy did what he was told without any protest or grumbling.

To add to their difficulty, the trail itself grew indistinct. Sometimes it quite lost itself in rocky wastes or still more perplexing bits of pasture. It was growing perceptibly darker. Robert was not in the least worried. Pauline and his friends were still in sight, and whatever fate befell one would probably befall all. In reality he felt more sorry for Mr. Marshall than he did for any one of themselves. He knew precisely in what a fever of anxiety he should be himself, if he were at the inn and the others, or even just Stephen and Donald, out on the mountain.

Finally the party lost the trail altogether, and it became a mere waste of time looking for it. They were in the midst of a stretch of rocky pasture, which for the moment constituted the whole of their visible world. Stephen suggested a council of war. As a matter of fact, this resolved itself into a discussion of the situation by Pauline and Billy, while the others listened. It was shortly agreed that Pauline should lead, while Billy, as independent critic, should sing out whenever he thought that she was going wrong. Pauline's confidence communicated itself to all the rest, and the party was soon moving down the mountain with more speed and assurance than when on the trail itself. Pauline's method was very simple. It consisted in keeping on the highest part of the ridge, and whenever it forked, taking the left-hand spur leading down towards the Pass. This order of march once established, no further doubts were expressed, or even felt, and the talk went on much as before.

Billy was the first to catch sight of a grayish white

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thread in the mist below them, and to announce it as the road leading from Llanberis Village to the summit of the Pass. It still took some pretty rough climbing to get to it, for the gray mist was closing down upon them more and more completely, and they had literally to feel their way. They came out rather lower down than Pauline anticipated, and had to climb up the Pass something over half a mile before they reached the inn. But by contrast, walking on the smooth white road was so very easy that the rest of the journey seemed a veritable luxury.

At the inn the lights were already lighted, and, glimmering through the mist, expressed a hearty welcome. Robert was thoroughly tired, and he rather fancied that Stephen and Donald felt the same; but Pauline and Billy seemed as fresh as when they started out. As they came into the hall, Billy announced that he meant to eat a tremendous dinner. A fire of sea coals blazed on the hearth. The coppers gleamed in the firelight. A double row of boots and shoes lumbered up one side of the room. It was much the same cheery scene that our three young friends had entered upon the night before, but so much had happened in the interval that it seemed, to one of them at least, that a week or a month had passed.

Pauline and the three friends dropped into chairs before the fire, while Billy ran off to tell Mr. Marshall that they had returned. Robert fully expected Billy to bring them word that Mr. Marshall was out hunting them with men and lanterns and brandy flasks, but to his surprise, father and son soon joined them, hand in hand. Mr. Marshall expressed no anxiety over their late returning, and did not chide them for stopping so long at the top. The only sign

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he gave was in stooping over and kissing Pauline, and in keeping hold of Billy's hand.

Robert could not help contrasting this welcome with the one his Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have proffered under similar circumstances. He could easily fancy that her mixed upbraidings for their carelessness and her audible self-pity for her own anxiety would have made the time until dinner tolerably uncomfortable. He recalled a cold, wintry afternoon when he and his cousins had been up at Bare Hill Pond skating, and had got home a little later than they expected. Miss Pendexter, as she herself expressed it, was in a state. She was in layers, alternately worried and cross: worried lest some harm had really befallen them, and cross because they had given her cause for worryment. Robert remembered especially that Miss Pendexter had been far more put out with him than with his cousins. He thought, at the time, that this was because she regarded him as the leader of the expedition and more responsible than the girls. She had made it seem light-minded enough in them, but almost inexcusable in him. It flashed over Robert, as he sat there in the cheerful firelight at Gorphwysfa, that perhaps the greater anger measured the greater affection, and that perhaps the willing of the major part of her fortune to him had, after all, been a matter of genuine sentiment, and not mere caprice.

Robert had seldom known what it was to be thoroughly and wholesomely tired out physically. He had often been weary unto death over figures and accounts recording operations in the spice trade,—too weary to eat or sleep. But to be tired out physically was almost a new experience.

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As he sat there in a comfortable chair before the fire, it struck him as the most delightful sensation in the world, just to be tired bodily and to be resting. His thoughts seemed to be particularly alert, and to be skipping about with extraordinary nimbleness.

Robert should, by all counts, have been listening, for Pauline was giving her father a lively account of the day's happenings. But he was not listening. He was conscious of pleasure in the sound of her voice, but he was not taking in what she was saying. The coal-fire and the hearth at Gorphwysfa did not in any way resemble the wood-fire and the brick hearth in his aunt's prim sitting-room at Bolton, but almost perversely the one evoked a picture of the other. Against the altogether foreign background of Pauline's voice flitted the shadowy figure of his aunt and the still substantial figures of his three cousins. Robert wondered, with a mixture of amusement and sobriety, whether, given anything of a chance, the Bolton cousins could ever have become girls somewhat more like Pauline. It never occurred to him that they could ever have been her equal, — Pauline was unique, — but the question was whether, if they had really had a chance, they might have come say within speaking distance of her. It brought a new tenderness into his recollection of the cousins. Then the thought came to Robert for the first time since he had inherited his aunt's fortune, whether these inexperienced, badly dressed little cousins had not just as much right to their aunt's property as he, or even more right. They had lived with her, cared for her, entertained her, above all, had put up with her day after day, while he, the heir-apparent, as it turned out, had given her only an

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occasional holiday, and rather grudgingly at that. And now he had the bulk of his aunt's fortune, something over six thousand a year, while the girls had the ancient square house at Bolton, the rocky acres, and about a thousand a year apiece. Robert had accepted this unequal favor of fortune quite without question. To-night he was asking himself whether it were just. The thought brought him up with such a start that involuntarily he leaned forward in his chair. Pauline took it that he wanted to add a touch to her own narrative, and paused expectantly, but Robert had nothing to say.

The three friends had meant to walk on to Bettws-y-Coed that night, and so reach Chester early in the morning. Such a plan was now impossible. It would have been thrown over anyway on the chance that the Marshalls might join them if they waited until Monday morning. The mere possibility made Robert happy. It seemed to him that fate had been astonishingly kind. His sense of undeserved good fortune deepened immeasurably when it turned out at dinner that the Marshalls had definitely decided to join them not only for the morrow's walk, but also for the Lake trip. Billy had been promised a week on Windermere before being assigned for the winter to the advanced institution of learning at Abbotsholme.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE OPEN ROAD

MONDAY proved to be an ideal day. Every vestige of cloud had disappeared. The sun shone from a warm blue sky upon an earth that seemed, out of sheer gratitude, to be smiling back. The white walls of Gorphwysfa were glistening in the strong light. The licensed victualer had stuck a flower in her hair. The maids had on particularly spotless caps and aprons. It was still only the third week in September, and the scant shrubbery was not yet touched by frost. About the world at large there was an air of irrepressible cheer.

Robert came out a little while before the others, his heart fairly singing with the joy of life. Billy was already in possession of the bench outside the door. He was whistling, and swinging his legs in unison with the tune. He looked up, hoping that it was Donald, but the morning was too good, and his own mood too expansive, to allow any disappointment when he saw that it was only Robert.

"Good-morning, Mr. Pendexter," he called out. "I say, is n't this a jolly morning for our walk? Don't you wish you were up on top of Snowdon this very minute? I do. Want a seat?" Billy threw out any number of questions, but these were to be taken as mere expressions of opinion, and called for no reply unless, by special emphasis or otherwise, a specific answer was demanded.

Robert sat down on the bench alongside of Billy. "A perfect morning," he replied. "But I'd rather be here

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than on Snowdon. I feel a growing interest in my breakfast."

"It's bang-up that you and Mr. Donald and Mr. Morse are going with us. Pauline'll be pleased, too. She likes Americans better than Britishers. She says so."

"I'm glad she does," Robert answered, feeling that he ought to head Billy off in some way, but not quite knowing how to do it.

"She'd be an awful duffer, you know, if she did n't," continued Billy, imperturbably, looking at the question wholly from Pauline's point of view. "I guess I just would n't speak to her if she went and married a Britisher. There was a man up in Edinburgh —"

"Billy," said Robert, resolutely, "how are you going to carry your luggage to Bettws-y-Coed?"

Billy was easily diverted, and took up the less alluring topic of conversation with equal enthusiasm. "Oh, dad's going to have a cart to carry the things. It'll go 'long with us all the way."

"That's good," said Robert. "Then your sister can ride too, if she gets tired."

"Pauline get tired!" exclaimed Billy, contemptuously. "You don't know Pauline. Pauline never gets tired. Why, Pauline can outwalk dad; she can even outwalk me, and I'm a boy. If anybody gets played out and has to ride, it'll be dad."

"Or Billy?" suggested Robert, laughing.

"I shan't ride," said Billy, stoutly; and then added, as an afterthought, "Not unless Mr. Donald does."

"Then I think you'll probably not ride."

A few moments later, Donald came out with Stephen,

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and was immediately appealed to as to whether he meant to ride any of the distance to The Royal Oak. As he declared that he meant to walk every inch of the way, Billy was equally strenuous in thinking that even on an unexciting wagon-road, walking was much ahead of riding. He had never been quite sure of it before. Pauline and Mr. Marshall now appeared, and they all went in to breakfast together.

By nine they were on the road, the six walkers ahead, and the high cart piled full of luggage crawling after them. As the road was broad, and few other travelers astir, our friends took up no particular order of march. Billy, of course, stuck pretty close to Donald, but this merely meant that Donald was the centre of Billy's gyrations. Billy was almost the incarnation of perpetual motion. On such a walk as this, he covered at least twice the distance made by the others.

Down the Pass to Pen-y-Gweyd, the party moved in a group, too much taken up with the beauty of the morning and the exhilaration of rapid movement to put together any very connected conversation. As the road approached Capel Curig and lost its distinctively mountain character, nature grew less insistent, and human nature came more into evidence. Stephen and Mr. Marshall fell into a discussion of American politics and finance; while Pauline — Donald on one side and Robert on the other — became the centre of rambling talk that swept from one end of the earth to the other. When they reached that well-known point in the road where you get the famous view of Snowdon, a delicious breeze sprang up, and as they turned to look at the mountain, swept through

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their lungs like a current of new life. Donald began repeating Whitman's "Song of the Road." It was pleasant to hear him, for he seemed not to be quoting or reciting, but merely talking in a rude verse, whose uncramped measure fitted in well with the sweep of their surroundings. "I like it all," said Donald, when he had finished. "Even the jolty parts. I'm sorry we live so much indoors. I think that's what's the matter with us now. We do dull, stupid things just to make money, when we'd much better be making verses. We get nervous and blue for mere lack of fresh air, and end by thinking that the world's going to the bow-wows, when only we ourselves are! Sometimes I think I'll be a tramp, or a gypsy, or a cow-boy, or a cab-driver, or even a policeman, for they are our only philosophers."

"What are you going to Berlin for, then,—a place where the sun hardly ever shines in winter, and the lamps are lighted at three o'clock?" demanded Pauline. "You'd much better be going to Italy or Egypt or India, where you could live outdoors all the time."

"That's just it," answered Donald, vigorously. "It's the perversity of fate, just a horrid trick, the kind that Destiny is always playing us, unless we stand out against her."

"Why don't you stand out against her, then?" asked Pauline. "It's silly to do things you don't want to. What are you going to Berlin for, if you don't like the sort of life that Berlin stands for? As I remember Berlin, it's a better place to study all sorts of dry things than it is to write poetry in."

"It's a bum place," put in Billy, whose erratic orbit brought him for a moment within hearing of the word.

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“A knock-down question that, — why I am going to Berlin,” answered Donald. “I guess it’s just because I’m a miserable coward!”

Donald spoke so earnestly that both Pauline and Robert looked at him inquiringly.

“Now you’re talking in riddles,” Pauline said. “I never do it myself, but I always thought it must be awfully brave to want to do one thing and deliberately go and do something else. I’d really like to know why you’re a miserable coward, would n’t you, Mr. Pendexter?”

Robert said that he would.

“Yes, I am,” reiterated Donald. “I’m just a miserable coward, — like most other men. I like to live outdoors and moon around and write verses. And instead of that, I teach German in a swell preparatory school — the language and literature, if you please — to a parcel of chaps who don’t care a rap about either. And I’ve come abroad to study, not for the joy of it, mind you, but mainly that the headmaster can announce to his mammas and papas that I’m straight from headquarters, the genuine article, and can give their young hopefuls the simon-pure *Aussprache*.”

Donald spoke lightly, but there was an unmistakable touch of bitterness in his words. Robert was at once all sympathy, but Pauline took the common-sense point of view. “Well, it’s worth while to teach boys German, is n’t it?” she asked. “It’s a good thing for them to know. And if you pretend to do it at all, you ought to do it well, and give them the right accent. I should just hate a teacher who taught me things that were n’t so.

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Where's the cowardice in preparing to do your work well? I really don't see what you're driving at."

"Dear lady," said Donald, more gently and reasonably, "if I loved to teach, it would be different. But I don't. I hate it! And yet I go on doing it. That's why I'm a coward!"

"I must be very stupid," Pauline replied, laughing in her frank, boyish way; "but you have n't told us yet just why you are so reprehensible. Must poets always be obscure? If you don't like to teach and still go on doing it, I think you're awfully foolish, but that's all I make out of it. If you do it well, thoroughly well, you know, in spite of your dislike, it seems to me, on the whole, rather heroic. Do you guess his riddle, Mr. Pendexter?"

Robert answered that he did n't, and that he was the more at sea, the more Donald talked. Robert rather liked to have Pauline appeal to him in this way.

"I'm much encouraged, *mes amis*," cried Donald, gayly. "I see that I am growing very cultivated. The more I say, the less I'm understood. It's a sure sign of culture. The dear headmaster would raise my salary at once if he could only hear you little ones talk."

Pauline once more turned to Robert. "It's quite hopeless, Mr. Pendexter. I've asked Mr. Fergusson three separate and distinct times why he is a coward, — a miserable coward, remember, — and he won't tell, or he can't tell, or he's ashamed to tell. Please do you ask him to inform us in such plain and simple English that, feeble and unpoetic as we are, we can really understand him."

Robert responded in the same gay spirit. "Mr. Donald Fergusson, poet and schoolmaster, will you *please* tell us

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why you are a miserable coward? Miss Pauline Marshall, of Indianapolis, wants to know. And I, Robert Pendexter, of Boston and Bolton, nobody in particular, also want to know. And will you please tell us in straight English that one or both of us can understand."

Robert's voice was never loud, but it was clear, and had amazing carrying power. It evidently reached Stephen, for he turned around and remarked dryly, "You'd better not. By advice of counsel. Fee, ten dollars," and went on talking with Mr. Marshall about the currency and the need of greater elasticity.

"But one must always heed a lady!" said Donald, gallantly. "I'm a coward, *mes amis*, because I have to earn my living, and being too lazy to get out and hustle for it, I stay indoors and teach, just because it's the easiest way and the laziest way to butter my bread. And I'm miserable, not *because* I'm a coward, not a bit of it, but because I'm such an unlucky dog that I *know* it. That's plain enough, in all conscience, and it's gospel truth, every word of it."

"If it *is* the truth," said Pauline, vigorously, "you just deserve to be miserable, much more miserable than you seem to be! If *I* were a man, I would n't work just for money, any more than I would fly. I should do exactly what I wanted to do, outdoors or indoors, and I rather think I should have butter on my bread, too. But if I could n't, I would eat it dry!"

"There speaks my better angel!" exclaimed Donald, with the most impersonal enthusiasm. "That's what the poet in me says, whenever I think of the interminable mammas and papas, and then I'm tempted to turn trouba-

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dour and wander through sunny lands. But nevertheless, behold the tragedy, — I go to Berlin ! ”

It was always difficult to know whether Donald were really in earnest, and Robert found himself adrift on strange seas. He had supposed it a piece of great good luck that Donald had this year's leave of absence, and also that Donald himself so regarded it. Stephen had said that the year off was for the purpose of writing more poetry. More puzzling still was Pauline's attitude. Donald might be merely trifling, but she, at any rate, was always in downright earnest. And here, in all seriousness, she was treating money as a matter of very second-rate importance, she who seemed from her clothes and general mode of life always to have had enough of it. Robert wondered if she would feel the same about money, and esteem it so lightly, if she had ever had to live on a clerkship of twelve hundred a year.

There had been a silence for some moments, when Pauline said, in a tone of conviction, “ Well, it *is* a tragedy, but you deserve it ! Perhaps Berlin will cure you, and you 'll go home a free man. That 's the most cheerful view to take of the situation, is n't it ? ”

Robert looked at Pauline in amazement. He himself would never have ventured to talk to Donald, or indeed to any one else, with such frankness ; and here Pauline, who hardly knew the man, was speaking not only with amazing frankness, but also without the least show of consciousness that it was not the most natural thing in the world to say just what one thought. Robert was genuinely puzzled. He had been brought up to think that good fortune meant money. There were other things of course, like health and



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education and travel, and that remote good, salvation, which came to decent people when they died. But up to the final catastrophe, it was money which acted as the sole purveyor of the feast, and even at death, the last will and testament, properly made out and duly charitable, was a substantial part of one's cosmic credentials.

At Bolton, this gospel had been well rubbed into Robert. His Aunt Matilda Pendexter never failed to tell him that he must be frugal and thrifty and industrious, and that then he would succeed. And to succeed meant to get money. At Doane Street, it would have been grotesque in the extreme to suppose that such an ill-assorted and uncongenial group of persons could have been induced to come together, day by day and month by month, for any less weighty reason. From this sweeping charge, Robert had to except Dennis Sullivan. The Irish boy had the least money, but he seemed to be the most human of them all. He really cared for the others, even for Messrs. Watson and Reed, whose manners had two sides, a smooth one for customers and a rough one for subordinates. In Pinckney Street, again, it was lack of money that was made to account for all the shabbiness of that very shabby quarter, the shabbiness of outlook as well as of possessions. To Robert himself, money had been the open sesame of a very dull world into a world whose bigness and brightness he was only just beginning to discover.

Robert had half learned the lesson of not asking direct questions through his slight intercourse with Alicia, and theoretically, at least, had accepted it as part of the standard for his readjusted behavior. But here was an issue in which he was too genuinely interested to let the sub-

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ject drop, even if he had to do violence to the new canon. "If you don't mind, Miss Marshall," he said, "I should like very much to know what you think a man ought to do?"

"Dear me, I don't mind in the least," answered Pauline, promptly. "But all I can tell you is what I should do myself, — if I were a man."

"That's just what I want to know," Robert replied, thankful, however, that Pauline was not a man.

"Well, in the first place, I'll tell you what I would n't be. I would n't be an artist of any sort or kind, that is, a painter, or a writer, or a musician, — not for *worlds*!"

Robert opened his eyes very wide. He himself would have given his right hand to be a poet. "Why not?" he demanded eagerly.

"Because they're a sickly lot," Pauline answered, with an amusing air of conviction. "I'd be a man first and last and always, and not a poor, driveling creature plucking at his sensations the whole livelong time, and throwing them into the market just as fast as he can get hold of them!"

"Whew!" cried Donald; "what an insufferable world it would be, without pictures, or books, or music!"

"I did n't say I would do without these things," Pauline protested. "I only said that I would n't be one of those professional factories that do nothing but turn such things out. I should like to paint a picture or write a book, or put together something new in music, if I were not too stupid, but I'd want to do it in a big way, just because I had to, and not keep on repeating myself until I became a chromo factory, or a typewriter, or a Swiss music-box."

"You're a most abandoned heretic," said Donald; "but do go on. What else would n't you be, — 'not for *worlds*'?"

Pauline made a wry face at this return of her own phrase, but went on, more in answer to Robert than to Donald: "Then I would n't be a doctor, for I hate sick people, especially people who get sick through their own fault, and then when you have them patched up, go right away and get sick again. And I would n't be a lawyer because I hate quarrelsome people —"

"How's that, Stephen?" cried Donald; "Miss Marshall says she would n't be a lawyer because she hates quarrelsome people! But she does n't say whether she means that the lawyers themselves are quarrelsome, or that their clients are."

Stephen was growing a little weary of the subject of American finance, especially as he and Mr. Marshall could not agree upon the matter of the currency, and was therefore glad to be drawn into the conversation of the younger people.

"It would n't be polite to ask her point-blank, since she's not on the witness-stand," he said promptly, "but I'll take her up on either count. In the first place, you must know, my children, that lawyers are the salt of the earth —"

"And have long since lost their savor," put in Pauline, quietly.

Stephen laughed in his characteristic wriggling way, that always made one feel that he was hugging himself with the sheer pleasure of it. "That's one on me, all right," he admitted heartily. "I'll start again. Lawyers

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are not quarrelsome. They hate quarrels, and they do their best to prevent quarrels. They have the look of fighting-machines, — I'll admit that, — and sometimes they're called into pretty hot action. But they are like the army and navy, the greatest promoters of peace on earth. Our own President says so, — *vide* 'Congressional Record,' volume so-and-so, page so-and-so — ”

“About lawyers, or about the army and navy?” asked Donald.

“I don't just recollect,” Stephen answered. “I think he was speaking about the army and navy. But to continue. If it were not for the lawyers, people would grow to be so quarrelsome that there would be no living in the house with them!”

“That would be just what I want,” interrupted Pauline, “for then we could live outdoors with them.”

“Verdict for the plaintiff,” sang out Stephen. “All the same, the defendant will appeal the case to the upper court and go on practicing.”

“What about the ministry?” asked Robert, whose New England traditions made him regard the parish minister as a person much to be looked up to. “Would you be a minister, Miss Marshall?”

“Never!” Pauline cried emphatically. “Not for *worlds*!” she added, glancing at Donald.

“Not even for the *other* world?” suggested Stephen.

“Not even for the *other* world,” Pauline replied, “for I don't believe in it.”

“You don't believe in the other world?” Robert asked, quite aghast. “You don't believe surely that when you die, you just go out like a snuffed candle, do you?”

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“Yes, I do,” Pauline answered. “Does that seem to you so very horrible?”

“Yes, it does. It makes things seem so hopeless.”

“I don’t find them hopeless,” Pauline replied. “On the contrary, I find things very much to my taste just as they are. Of course, I don’t say that there may not be another world after this one, perhaps many of them, but I should n’t be willing to preach it, for it may not be so. In fact, I should n’t be willing to preach it anyhow. I think the preaching, like the painting and all the other things, ought to be incidental, just a part of our natural daily life. Not so much preaching, you know, as just doing the right thing without saying anything about it. I could n’t make my salt at preaching, for I should always say the same thing, and when people had heard my one sermon, they would n’t go on paying to hear it over and over again.”

“What *would* you say in your one sermon?” asked Robert, eagerly anxious to fill up the gap that seemed yawning between Pauline and himself.

Pauline stretched out her hands in happy imitation of the attitude of exhortation, and exclaimed, “I should say, ‘My brethren and my sisteren, be big,—just be big! And to-morrow, be a little bigger!’ And the next time I should say precisely the same thing.”

“A mighty good sermon,” commented Stephen. “You don’t have to be a minister to say that, or to have a pulpit to say it in. But it’s only fair to add, though, that your modern minister is not so much a preacher as an organizer of social work, a man set apart to look after the more ideal interests of society.”

“That’s just it!” said Pauline, quickly. “I should n’t

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want to be a man set apart for anything whatever. I should want to be a part of the ideal interest, and not the boss, not even if I could wear a frock coat and a top hat and a white tie all the time!"

Robert was puzzled. Stephen was delighted, for here was an honest sinner after his own heart. Donald was merely amused. Billy did n't know what they were all talking about. They all laughed, after the stupid manner of grown-ups, when there was nothing in sight to laugh at, and so Billy in disgust had carried off his father as the least incomprehensible companion of the lot.

It was Donald who summed up the situation: "Miss Marshall would n't work for money, and she would n't be a painter, or a writer, or a musician. And she would n't be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a clergyman. There is only one thing left. Like your humble servant, she would be a pedagogue, only learned!"

"Would you be a teacher, Miss Marshall, — if you were a man?" asked Robert, with renewed interest.

Pauline held up her hands in protest. "You make me feel as if I were a school-girl again, and trying to pass an examination, — you hurl so many questions at me. Yes, I would be a teacher, but only as I would be the other things, just by the way, you know. I would n't teach in a school-room for anything, — unless I had to. I'd teach in my own home, — my children, if I had any — and my wife, if she'd let me!"

"You perceive that Mademoiselle knows the sex," put in Donald. "She adds the one necessary condition."

Pauline ignored the thrust, and continued: "But I would n't teach even them unless I got paid for it!"

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"How mercenary!" ejaculated Donald, while Robert pricked up his ears.

"I did n't say in what coin," Pauline hastened to add, in her own defense. "I would only teach them if they would teach me in return."

"You need n't be afraid," said Donald, with the air of one who knew. "If you had a lot of small boys to look after, they'd teach you and no mistake, more than you could ever teach them. And though it's only hearsay, I understand that wives like nothing better than to instruct and discipline their husbands."

"Don't be discouraged from taking unto yourself a wife by anything that Donald may say," put in Stephen, in his judicial manner; "that is, supposing you were a man. It's well known — so I need n't hesitate to mention it — that Donald writes sonnets to half a dozen maidens in the same month, and is only deterred from saying 'Wilt thou?' by the overwhelming — I might say insurmountable — difficulty of choosing one and throwing over the other five. Donald would be a settled married man, and pushing a perambulator in some quiet suburb, were only the other fair charmers away."

"That's just the point I was trying to make against all your poets and writers," said Pauline. "They are so busy studying their emotions, and blowing bubbles with them, and recording them with due regard to literary style, that no big emotion ever takes possession of them and sweeps them off their feet into real happiness."

"Stung again, Donald!" cried Stephen. "You're up against a tough proposition when you throw gibes at American girls."

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"I did n't mean to be personal," protested Pauline. "Forgive me, Mr. Fergusson, if I seemed to be."

Donald laughed good-naturedly. "I *am* getting it rather hard, but doubtless I deserve it. If Stephen ever falls in love, he will throw his judicial habits into the waste-paper basket, and elope in a very whirlwind of passion."

"That I will," assented Stephen, cheerfully. "Just as soon as I find the right girl, and especially if there are any dangerous rivals in sight. But meanwhile, if I might suggest such a thing, we have wandered pretty far from the point at issue, and that is the momentous question as to what Miss Pauline Marshall would do, were she a man, and called upon to make his or her own living. With rare skill it has been brought out what Miss Marshall would *not* do. It still remains to learn what she *would* do. And if I understand the situation aright, unless this disclosure is clearly made before we reach The Royal Oak, Mr. Robert Pendexter will be quite unable to eat a mouthful of luncheon."

Donald looked at his friend in mock admiration. "What it is to have a great mind! So much better, dear Miss Marshall, than mere emotions."

Pauline was not to be trapped again. "Speaking in general," she said, with smiling caution, "very much better! It's left to me to rescue Mr. Pendexter and disclose what I *would* do if I were a man. I wish I were!"

"As far as I can see," Stephen suggested, "there are only three things left to you, unless you wanted to be a mere manual laborer and work in a ditch or a factory. You could be a business man, or a farmer, or you could



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be a coupon-clipper, like that favorite of fortune, our friend, Mr. Pendexter."

Robert winced a little at this reference to himself, but Pauline seemed not to notice it.

"Rather stupid alternatives," she said. "I should n't want to be any of them, neither a business man, nor a farmer, and I could n't be a coupon-clipper."

"Why not?" asked Robert.

"Well, for one thing," Pauline answered, "as I would n't work for money in the first instance, I should n't be able to buy anything that would bear a crop of coupons, would I now?"

"No," admitted Robert; "but suppose some one left them to you, that is, investments that would bring you in enough money to live on, — what then?" Robert meant to be wholly impersonal, but the vivacity of his manner made it clear that he was really asking judgment on his own case.

Pauline chose to ignore this aspect of the problem, and answered without hesitation, "That would never satisfy me. Men can't all be coupon-clippers. It would n't be a possible scheme for all people to live on incomes. Somebody must do the work, must keep the pot boiling, must make the food and shelter and clothes. I should want to do a man's share along with the rest. I would n't work for money, but I would work for bread and butter."

Stephen shook his head as if he were greatly shocked, and said with assumed gravity, "I fear me that you are a wicked socialist, and will corrupt our young friend, Mr. Pendexter."

"I don't know what a socialist is," Pauline answered,

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"and I don't believe that you do. I never met anybody that did. But all the same, I've said just what I mean." Pauline threw back her shoulders and drew in a long breath of the good air.

"I quite believe that you've said what you mean," Stephen replied, "or at least that you mean what you've said. But you have n't told us *yet* how you'd make your bread and butter, if you declined the old and popular route via money. Mr. Pendexter's luncheon is still in jeopardy."

"I'd find a way," said Pauline, confidently. "For one thing, I'd live in the country in a big, plain house with plenty of land around it."

"But where would you get it?" persisted Stephen. "All persons can't have such estates."

"I'd accept as much as that from my grandfather," Pauline answered. "The world is not new, just beginning. Our ancestors have done a lot of good work, into which we come by a very natural inheritance. I could accept such a home from the past with clear conscience. And if it was n't forthcoming, I'd make enough money to buy the home for myself. There are plenty of them, not in fashionable localities, perhaps, or even in very convenient localities. But they could be made beautiful, and that would be enough, would n't it?"

"I suppose so," Stephen replied, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "But how would you support such a home, when you had it? how pay the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, buy clothes for the kids and send them to school, pay the cook, the chamber-maid, the waitress, the stable-boy, the hired man, to say nothing

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of new bonnets for Madame and occasional jaunts to Europe?"

Pauline laughed at the overwhelming list of expenditures. "You don't frighten me one little bit. We should never for a moment consent to such extravagance. We should do most of our own work, raise most of our own food, make most of our own clothes, teach the children ourselves until they got too big for us, and when we did need things that cost money, I'd work for them in any way I could."

"That would be working for money," said Robert.

"Oh, no, it would n't," Pauline protested; "only for money *en route* to the things we actually needed, and never beyond that."

"It would keep you pretty busy to carry through such a program," suggested Stephen, "for you would lose the benefit of the division of labor. But the weakest part in the whole scheme seems to me that when all is done and said, I can't see for the life of me that you're getting anywhere. What's the purpose in such a life? Where does civilization come in, and progress? What should you say you were aiming at? How could you justify such a life? People would say that you were n't taking your part in the great struggle for existence, that you were playing while the rest were working. How could you answer them? Where would you turn up at the end of it all?"

Robert listened eagerly for Pauline's answers. Stephen had voiced his own doubts, and had done it more clearly than he could have hoped to do it for himself. The Pendexter conscience was appalled at the picture of such

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unabashed and irresponsible happiness. Pauline, in turn, was amused at their earnestness. Their position was quite as incomprehensible to her as her position was to them. She found it difficult to answer them, not because answers from her point of view were not forthcoming, but because they seemed to be speaking a different language.

"Listen," she said, puckering up her forehead in the effort to be more than commonly lucid, and incidentally making Robert think her more charming than ever. "You see most people work for money, — even poets. They think they are working for the good things money will buy. They all begin that way, except the out-and-out misers. But money can be hoarded, — that's the bother with it. So people put off buying the good thing, and hoard up their money to buy something better. It gets to be a habit. Even Billy does it, though he knows father will give him everything he wants. This goes on and on until the money comes to be looked upon as being itself the good thing, and you have what you have. If I were a man, I should n't work for money, — I should work for leisure, and more and more of it. You can't hoard leisure. You must spend it just as fast as it comes. And that means life, — to-day — now — this minute — always. Can't you see that the one good thing is to live! One can ask nothing beyond that!"

Robert was naturally stirred at this outburst, for Pauline was magnificent in her enthusiasm. Stephen looked at the girl in momentary admiration, but was still above all else the lawyer. "That's all very well," he said; "but what would you do with your leisure? One must get somewhere with one's life. How would you justify yourself to others?"

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“Justify myself to others!” — Pauline fairly blazed — “I’d never do such a degrading thing. No human being has a right to call me to account,—even to question me. I should n’t attempt to justify myself, even to myself. And as for the point of it, you miss it all, if you are forever trying to get somewhere with your life. It’s enough to live. That’s what I’d do with my leisure, spend it greedily on life,—just *live*. I’d sit in the sun and do nothing, if I wanted to! There’s plenty to do with leisure, if you’re not trying all the time to trade it off for money. I’ve just told you that I am one of those people who are not sure of another life. But I want it tremendously in order to have more leisure,—leisure not for getting somewhere, but just to *spend*. I’d love my wife and children, read the books I want to read, eat the fruit in my orchard, pick the flowers in my garden, bathe in the brook, wander on the hill-tops, ride in the valley, lie on my back in the moonlight, hear songs and music, keep Thanksgiving Day every day in the year, be a friend worth having. I’d taste life to the full,—to the very full. That’s what I’d do if I were a man!”

“And being a woman?” Stephen asked, with interest.

“I shall do what I can!” said Pauline, more quietly.

“And when you came to die, what then?” asked Robert, almost involuntarily. It seemed to him, even as he spoke, as if his Aunt Matilda Pendexter had put the question, and not he himself.

There was something almost scornful in Pauline’s answer. “When I came to die? Well, for one thing, I should n’t be a coward. I should n’t say I was glad to go unless the life spark were really quite spent. In that case,

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I should go because I had to, and without asking a question. I can take the unknown on trust!"

"It seems to *me*," said Stephen, with the air of the judgeship strong upon him, "that it's just as well you *are* a woman and will have a husband to manage the finances. The only way to have leisure in this mixed-up world of ours is to have some one else finger the pocket-book, either a husband or an ancestor, and to have them do it to a pretty lively quickstep."

Pauline laughed, and Robert thought what a very beautiful world it would be if only Pauline would take a husband. The color mounted into his cheeks, and when at last they all marched into The Royal Oak, at Bettws-y-Coed, Robert looked the least tired of the party. For the moment, all the vexed problems of the road slipped out of his mind, quite lost in the one blissful fact that he loved Pauline, and that he knew it.

## CHAPTER VII

### ADRIFT

ON the following evening our three young friends and the Marshalls found themselves established at Bowness in a hostelry which for some not easily discernible reason called itself Old England. But it offered fairly pleasant rooms, and a garden which stretched down to the shore of Windermere.

The three young men had gathered up their traps at Chester, and, once more in Liverpool, had snatched a moment at the tailor's, while the Marshalls drove to the banker's and attended to their own errands. Robert was measured for the first evening suit he had ever owned in his life, and quite without protest had allowed Stephen to get him in for an extra five pounds on an additional dinner-coat. Stephen added a figured waistcoat to a wardrobe already more than abundant. Donald, with the frugality of those living on their capital, waited until they got to the haberdasher's, and contented himself with one new necktie.

By afternoon the coats were ready to try on, and the finished garments were promised for the following afternoon, to be sent by express to Bowness. Stephen managed the trunks so adroitly that none of them arrived at the hotel that evening, and all three men were obliged to appear at dinner in their traveling-clothes. The other guests at Old England stared less than usual at this

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unorthodox dress, since even Englishmen walking through the Lake District with no luggage beyond a knapsack were commonly reduced to similar straits. Pauline appeared in a fresh costume, so beautiful in its simplicity that it made the more elaborate gowns of the other women look worn and faded, and set the women themselves to wondering, with some little irritation, how these American girls managed to look so pretty on practically nothing at all.

Pauline herself was radiant. Liverpool and the dismal coal country that lies between it and the Lakes had filled her pagan soul with gloom, and made her feel, in spite of the comfort of a first-class railway carriage, that she was being slowly suffocated. Robert had watched her with interest. He was conscious of a little falling off in his own spirits, due to the depressing clouds of coal smoke that hung like a pall over the sooty towns and villages; but he had put it all down to the fact that it carried him momentarily back to the gloom of Doane Street. But his own moods were rapidly becoming mere reflections of Pauline's. As far as he personally was concerned, he would have been happy in a coal mine itself, if only Pauline had been there with him. As it was, he had felt a personal grievance against the whole landscape for the simple reason that it weighed on Pauline and cast a temporary shadow over her superb spirits.

But at Bowness all dull spirits and all grievances completely disappeared. The sun was shining through an atmosphere devoid of coal dust; the children looked clean and happy; the earth spread out before them like a favored garden where soot and smoke and ugliness found no home.



They had driven down to the lake, and to the hospitality of Old England, on top of a coach that suggested nothing so much as a mere perch in space. But it was a perch that rushed through the sweet air, past quaint shops and trim villas, country lanes and homelike cottages, with all the eagerness of their own spirits.

Robert had the unspeakable good fortune to sit next to Pauline. When they caught their first glimpse of the lake, it was already sunset. The smooth waters and the green hills that surrounded them were bathed in a golden light that brought out their own proper color, and yet fused them into one dream-like unity. Robert touched Pauline's hand. He did it so impulsively that no prim New England ancestor had time to inhibit the movement. Pauline's hand, like his own, was ungloved. The quick contact, the almost imperceptible pressure that he allowed himself, sent a thrill through Robert that made him forget the sunset, and for the moment remember only Pauline.

Pauline accepted the movement as simply as if it had been an exclamation of wonder. She turned towards Robert and answered him quite as if he had put some question. "It is fine, is n't it? Now I am alive again. I wish I could live here always."

"Windermere's a regular corker," chimed in Billy; and then, his patriotism coming to the front, he added judiciously, "It's most as pretty as Lake Asquam."

"It's prettier, you little bigot," said Stephen, almost harshly.

"What's a bigot?" asked Billy, appealing rather to Donald than to Stephen. "If I'm a little bigot, I'd like to know what it means."

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"Sound principle," murmured Stephen. "The proper study of mankind is man."

Donald answered rather more lucidly. "A bigot, sonny, is a fellow that gets such a tight grip on the truth that it screws his eyes fast shut, and he can't tell what he's got hold of."

Billy looked bewildered a moment, but got out of the difficulty by speedily remarking, "Well, I guess I'm not a bigot, then, for *I* never shut *my* eyes unless I'm fast asleep. Do I, Pauline?"

"I suppose not," the girl answered.

Robert had withdrawn his hand. The sunset colors were already beginning to fade, and Robert was dimly conscious that his own elation was fading with them. He had seemed just for a moment to have come so near Pauline, and then he had suddenly become conscious that in reality he had not come near her at all. Robert had still to learn that until it is returned, love is a pain, a bewilderment, a fancy; that love is like quarreling, — it takes two to make it complete.

It was a curious part of Robert's present emotional state that he had never really asked himself whether by any chance Pauline could seriously care for him, or even in some future hour of good fortune could be induced to care for him. It was probably just as well that he never put the question. He had such a poor opinion of himself that he would have answered it overwhelmingly in the negative. Certainly no detail of remembrance could bring to mind a single incident in which Pauline had expressed the smallest preference for him or for his company. She had accepted all three young men as pleasant

additions to their own limited party, and had shown a frank enjoyment which allowed no personal illusions on the part of any of them.

At dinner, however, all Robert's momentary depressions and doubts were lost in the general sense of good-fellowship which pervaded the party. They sat much as they did at Gorphwysfa, except that they now had a table to themselves, and Billy, having captured Donald, had him on his left, while Mr. Marshall sat at the end of the table, opposite Pauline. Robert sat at her right, and practically had the girl all to himself, for the party divided itself quite naturally into pairs. Stephen and Mr. Marshall, once off the dangerous subject of the currency, got on together famously. Billy monopolized Donald, not by any explicit permission, but at least without protest, as Donald found Pauline too little complex for his own taste, too much of "a natural history girl," as he himself phrased it; and Mr. Marshall, with his absorption in affairs, quite frankly bored him.

Robert had met too few people socially to have acquired the analytical habit. Being decidedly negative himself, he liked everybody who was at all nice to him; and Mr. Marshall and Pauline and Billy, all having been nice to him in a genuine, impersonal way, he liked them all, and Pauline he loved, or fancied that he loved, which, for persons not particularly skilled in introspective analysis, is very much the same thing. Under the influence of this feeling, Robert quite let himself go. Instead of the shy, silent creature of Pinckney Street circles, he was rapidly becoming a more interesting and attractive man. Pauline was deepening what the steamer life had begun. How

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rapidly Robert was blossoming, he himself was least of all aware, for by the happy law of such encounters, the more conscious he became of Pauline, and the more engrossed in her large personality, the less conscious he grew of himself, and the less paralyzed by a sense of his own limitations. Robert found it easy to talk to Pauline, much easier than it had been to talk to Alicia, and Pauline found it easy to talk to Robert. There was nothing particularly edifying in their talk. The worldly wise would certainly not have thought it worth reporting or preserving. They talked much as two children might have talked, occasionally about themselves and their own naïve experiments in life, but generally about outdoor matters and the surface of things. There were no deep waters in this talk, no subtle meanings and pleasant intellectual surprises. As a matter of fact, it lacked the touch of fancy and the unexpected turnings in the road that made the talk between Donald and Billy seem quite worth while; or even the practical common-sense that gave to Stephen and Mr. Marshall the air of being veritable Solons in the world of affairs. And yet of the three, the talk between Robert and Pauline was the most significant. It would be hard to say whether it was doing anything in particular for Pauline, since so much in the contemporaneous lives of women puts on significance, or puts it off, wholly in the light of subsequent events. In the case of Robert, however, it was unwrapping some of the outer layers of the many that still enfolded his spirit. Robert was being educated, for after all has been said and done, education is merely the unfolding of the human spirit, and culture the perfecting of the spirit.

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As the other three men were smokers, and Robert was not, it was quite natural for him to accompany Pauline when she withdrew from the dining-room, and quite as natural for them to select the garden rather than the ill-furnished drawing-room. It is quite possible that the talk might have lost its full-bodied flowing current, and reduced itself to rather pitiable trickling, had not Pauline, in her blunt, wholesome way, proposed that it stop altogether, and that they simply enjoy the moonlight and the lake. So it happened that they silently walked up and down the gravel paths, or sat for a few moments at a time on the benches near the pier. For Pauline, nothing existed but the night: not the night in all the mystery of its spiritual suggestion; not the immensity, the impenetrable wonder, that it was to Alicia, but simply the physical, delicious night, with all its coolness and quiet. Robert was not a part of her experience. He might have been Billy or her father, or he might even not have been there at all: Pauline's sensations would have been precisely the same. She was practically unconscious of his presence beyond the trivial fact that his being there saved her from any concern on the part of her father or any bothersome curiosity on the part of strangers.

But with Robert the case was quite reversed. For him, nothing existed but Pauline. The night was wholly casual, the unessential setting of a drama so absorbing as to leave no room for scenery or stage directions. Had Pauline been a veritable coquette, and bent on winning Robert most completely and in the least possible time, she could not have chosen a better or more effective method than just this silence in a moon-smitten garden on the banks of

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Windermere. In reality Robert was not exploring Pauline or Windermere. He was exploring the wonderful recesses in the unknown depths of his own heart.

Pauline's superb health, which showed even in the moonlight, her commanding good looks, the beauty of her simple dress, all took complete possession of Robert. Her very silence added to the enchantment. Had she spoken, it would have been sensibly and to the point, but the silence allowed a spiritual quality, a touch of Heaven, that her talk could never have given. Robert's imagination had not been so well exploited as Donald's. It had been treated, indeed, rather as an intruder than as a welcome guest. But it was awakening, and just now was very active. One by one, Robert's heated imagination was investing Pauline with every endowment, with every charm, until she stood before him incomparable, unique, a very goddess. Even the dizzy height of her pedestal did not strike Robert as unreasonable. In the morning, in her absence, he might have seen. But not to-night. Her presence, which acted upon him as the magnet does on unresisting iron; her silence, which allowed him quite undisturbed to endow her with every quality that he most worshiped; the inconstant moon, which seems bent upon evoking unquiet tides in the hearts of men as well as in the unstable sea, — all joined their potencies, and this new Robert of a month's creating was madly in love. Could the self-conscious spice clerk of Doane Street have looked down upon Windermere that night, he would have gazed with open-eyed astonishment upon these unsuspected depths of feeling. But there was no such spectator. Even the Puritan ancestors were absent. For once, Robert was wholesomely and thoroughly

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unconscious of himself. For it is curiously true that in that supreme tide of egotism, when love reaches its crest, the human heart throws off its littleness, and becomes one with the object of its desire.

Had Robert been the fortunate owner of a castle on the far side of the lake, had he had a staunch boat and some trusty retainers at command, he would have carried off Pauline bodily, and claimed her by right of possession for his very own. Nor would it have occurred to him in his present exalted mood to doubt that Pauline, whatever her maidenly resistance might have been, would have shared his supreme emotion, and have gone with him with joy in her heart.

As a matter of fact, they walked silently along the well-groomed gravel paths. They made the appropriate turns, the necessary retracements. Had it not been for the ban of silence, this intense, absorbing drama going on in Robert's soul would have found voice, and all the white heat of it would have been poured into Pauline's ears. But as it was, she heard nothing, not even with the inward ear of the spirit, and Robert's emotion, too fine and too intense ever quite to repeat itself, spent its force vainly like some unfelt storm upon a shoreless sea. And Pauline, being, as Donald had put it to himself, "a natural history girl," perceived no drama, no flood-tide of emotion, no spiritual crisis in their two lives. What she saw, in so far as she saw Robert at all, was a slight, eager man, alive with a strange vitality which she did not fathom, and agreeable chiefly because he was not disagreeable. She caught no glint of the indwelling spirit holding out eager hands towards her spirit, and ready to serve and cherish her in this world and the

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next. And so it proved a passion in the desert, a white light to one of them, but not to the other ; an abiding light to neither.

It was not Pauline's fault. She had been untouched, not because she declined to be, but for the more fundamental reason that she was wholly unconscious that any appeal had been made. No intuition, no woman's prescience, spoke to her of deep emotion. It was quite the same as if Robert had been dreaming of stocks and bonds, or wondering how his new evening suit would become him.

Nor was it quite Robert's fault. He had not ignored this deep cry of nature, or slighted it, or even put it off. Speech had trembled on his lips. But he had waited, in fine deference, until Pauline should exhaust her mood of silence. Had she spoken a word, made so much as one exclamation of delight at the beauty of the night, one audible comment, however trivial, the flood-gates would have opened, and Robert would have poured out his heart before her. It is doubtful whether even Pauline, with all her poise, could have withstood the passionate torrent of avowal which a more psychical person, one more sensitive to the voices of the air, would have felt impending, — could scarcely have failed to feel impending, — and by some adroit command of the situation would either have averted or invited. But it so chanced — if there be such a thing as chance in this intelligent, purpose-saturated universe of ours — that Pauline spoke no word, not at least until the others had joined them, and the situation, once so freighted with possibilities, flattened out into a lost opportunity.

Shortly afterwards, Pauline went up to bed, and this evening, when fate had appeared to be so wide awake, she



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remembered solely because the moon had been at the full, and the air had been so genial that she had been able to stay out-of-doors instead of being cooped up in a stuffy drawing-room.

Robert was much too excited to think of sleep. He kept Stephen and Donald up until midnight, and not until they had all three pulled out to the middle of the lake, and seen the night from that superb vantage-ground, would he consent to go upstairs.

Stephen wondered for a moment if anything had happened. But when he recalled Pauline's unmistakable calm, and the wholly conventional good-night between herself and Robert, he put it down to the general waking up which was manifestly taking place in the erstwhile drab little spice clerk. Donald's insight extended no farther. Not being minded to write sonnets to Pauline himself, it never occurred to him that any one else should be falling in love with her.

Robert went to bed without any consciousness that the great moment had passed. To him it seemed merely delayed. As he grew calmer, he came to think it fortunate that Pauline had not broken the spell of silence. He knew, of course, that, the spell once broken, he would have poured out all his love in one overwhelming torrent. Once more away from Pauline, and able in the long, sleepless watches of the night to think out the matter with tolerable clearness, he began for the first time to ask himself quite seriously just where Pauline stood, and what reason he could have to think that she either cared for him, or would even come to care. Being so honest about himself that he was almost dishonest, he saw with pitiless clearness that he

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had very little to offer a girl of Pauline's temperament, one who had always had everything of the best, and who, in the matter of lovers as well, had a perfect right to demand the best. In the heat of his passion, Robert would have dared everything since he would have been unconscious that he was daring anything. He would have felt that Pauline could not help but respond. So overmastering an emotion could not have left the girl unmoved.

But now in the quiet, the flood in his great emotion had ebbed, and he believed that he saw things in a truer light. He persuaded himself to believe that it would have been mere madness to have spoken to Pauline, a premature ruining of all his hopes.

As far as Robert could evolve any plan out of the present emotional chaos, he resolved to keep a very strong hand on himself, to utter no word, to suffer no look, to permit no act, that could be construed, even by the judicially minded Stephen, to be an approach to wooing Pauline. He would keep himself as near Pauline as possible, he would stand ready to serve, he would fall in with every mood, — in a word, he would wait. And some day, when the moment seemed ripe, he would speak out. Meanwhile Pauline was not to know. She was not to be bothered with having to think of him as a lover. Perhaps the tragedy in this little rehearsal was in this last touch. Robert need not have given himself all this constructive work. He might have made his own rôle much less exacting and less subtle. It would have been equally effective. The last thing that Pauline temperamentally could do was just this, to read the inner meaning in another soul.

Robert need not have spun these gossamer webs for her protection. In Pauline herself were adequate curtains of more solid tissue. There was something deeply pathetic in Robert's purpose to protect Pauline from a situation which did not exist, and which, without some radical change in the girl's make-up, could never arise.

It was almost morning when Robert finally fell asleep. He slept so late that when, at last, he went downstairs, the others had breakfasted and were taking a short row on the lake.

The stay at Bowness lasted for a week. As the whole excursion, so far as the Marshalls were concerned, was primarily an outing for Billy before his withdrawal from general society into the instructive atmosphere of Abbots-holme, he was allowed to shape the general plans. No better cicerone could have been found, for Billy, being an extremely active small person, elected to visit all the places of interest, major and minor, within a day's journey of Bowness. It is doubtful whether even American tourists ever saw so much of the Lake District before within the same space of time. The weather aided and abetted Billy's laudable desire to see everything. Seldom had such glorious weather been known. Instead of the disheartening downpour which commonly makes life on Windermere a scarcely intermittent shower-bath, the sun graciously shone on five out of the seven days, and even on the dull days the showers were far enough apart not to interfere seriously with more important human undertakings. Local comment on the weather threatened, however, to become almost as much of a nuisance as rain itself. The Americans, accustomed to accept good weather as

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their proper share and portion, and bad weather as an unmannerly interruption, basked in the phenomenal sunshine as a matter of pure right; but not so the lake-dwellers. All, with one accord, — boatmen, coach-drivers, innkeepers, gentry, and British tourists, — were so struck with the weather that they could talk of nothing else, and quite forgot to look at the tenderly beautiful scenery which all this flood of sunshine so charmingly revealed.

The effect of the Lake District upon our six friends was characteristic in the extreme. To Stephen and Mr. Marshall the lakes, hills, running waters, mountains, crags, fells, and vales were not individual and distinct elements of pleasure. Rather, they all fused into one shifting scene, pleasant enough in its way, but really of quite secondary importance, and valuable chiefly as an agreeable setting for more interesting human affairs, — not so much human romances and passions as land tenures and economic achievements. To Donald and therefore by reflection to Billy, whose boyish materialism was sometimes transfigured by a touch of imagination and fancy into something more fluid, the whole country-side was holy ground; holy not only because of its own beauty and inherent, unescapable poetry, but holy because on this very ground the poets had walked among men. Donald tiptoed about, his hat in his hand, and, metaphorically speaking, his shoes from off his feet. He had an unaccountable way of standing perfectly still for several minutes, seeing the things that only poets can see, and making mental photographs that were afterwards to march in stately procession through the chambers of his soul as he read Coleridge and Wordsworth. At other times, Donald would drop on his knees, and quite

forget the rest of the party until the particular mood was satisfied.

Billy, awed by Donald's reverence, came to the private conclusion that poets were not such rum fellows after all, and even determined to dip into several whose very names had been made obnoxious to him by his last English teacher. But this good resolution not even themselves could have dragged out of him.

Upon Pauline and Robert, the magic of this English paradise acted with what they supposed to be precisely the same effect, but in reality with effects that were wholly dissimilar. Such a mistake, common enough to all of us, was inevitable in their case. Pauline, quite blind to the more sensitive and psychic side of Robert's nature, supposed that he and all the rest of the party, with the possible exception of Donald, experienced precisely what she experienced, — a delightful accession of physical enthusiasm, due to the big beauty of surrounding nature, the intoxicating air, the constant and healthful exercise. For the world of things, the large aspects of nature, — mountains, sky, sea, — she had an almost passionate attachment. For the world of persons, she had a sound instinct of gregariousness, but except for Billy and her father, no personal feeling warmer than a friendly indifference. She liked our three young friends collectively much better than she did individually. As Pauline looked out upon the world of persons, she had to acknowledge to herself that, on the whole, the most of them were not so well-conditioned as she was. It was a purely natural history judgment, and involved no sense of self-righteousness, but it did give to her general attitude its one sophistication, a touch of con-

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tempt for persons smaller and less adequate than herself. It was also at the root of her one absorbing sentiment, her worship of bigness. In spite of its physical vastness, it was really a limited world in which Pauline lived, a world which seemed to present the whole of truth, nakedly and without evasions, but which in reality offered only a windy, uninhabited solitude.

And yet Pauline herself was far from being the uninteresting creature that Donald in his over-hasty judgment had soon put her down to be. She was not a person for a discriminating, highly-sensitive poet like himself to write sonnets to, but her point of view, as far as it went, was distinctly wholesome. And then always there was the possibility — which no poet should lose sight of — that some great day the divine fire might descend and, touching the sleeping soul, rouse it into a magnificent activity, the more magnificent, perhaps, for reason of its long, refreshing sleep. That Robert should have believed that in the present Pauline he had already found a kindred soul was absurd, if absurd at all, only in the most objective way. The blindest and most inexperienced of lovers, Robert was worshiping a being as unlike the real Pauline in all essential qualities as the self he wanted to be was unlike the self he was. The initial attraction had been physical. In spite of the fineness of Robert's own nature, he could scarcely be said to have explored Pauline's soul and fallen in love with that, when her soul, being still in the hall of sleep, was not yet open to exploration. Nor could he quite be said to have fallen in love with her body. It was rather her wholesomeness, her bigness, her vitality. Robert's own vitality was constitutionally low. In the first flush of

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returning health he had come to look upon vitality as worshipful. Pauline seemed the very embodiment of it. Robert's own daily round had been petty and narrow. The sweep of Pauline's days seemed to him magnificent. He had been dimly conscious in his intercourse with Stephen and Donald that somehow he himself had missed life and had been putting up with a poor substitute. How irrevocable this missing had been, he could not, happily for his own courage, quite realize. He lightly put aside his thirty-four years and believed that all things were still possible. His week on the Republic had taught him new values. Pauline, apparently, had always known them, had always possessed them, had always been wholesome and big and vital.

To Robert, with his aroused feelings and new standards, Pauline seemed the incarnation of the larger life. He could no more help loving her than he could escape the hundred and one reactions which grew out of the whole wonderful experience that had come to him since the break with his old life.

The feeling for Pauline once aroused, it was inevitable that Robert, idealist and dreamer as well as coffee and spice clerk, should build up a fictitious Pauline, not only possessed of the wholesomeness and bigness and vitality which he knew himself to be deficient in, but also of those sensibilities of the spirit which through inheritance and suffering were indubitably his, and of all those idealities of the soul which, as yet, he could only aspire to.

In reality, Robert was less of a type than any of the party, less even than Donald or Billy. For Robert the change of environment had been so extreme as to be almost

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dislocating. The old set of ideas and habits had a permanence not easily disturbed. They had been growing for thirty-four years. The new set of ideas and habits was not yet firmly established. To Robert, therefore, life was no easy passing of the days. It was rather a hand-to-hand fight, a constant struggle between conflicting ideals. One moment he was a conservative, — the next, a radical. He would have seemed, from any worldly point of view, both uncertain and inconsistent. When he was with his friends, he very genuinely shared the broad worldliness of Mr. Marshall, the shrewd common-sense of Stephen, the poetic idealism of Donald, the ingenuousness of Billy, even, in a measure, the physical bigness of Pauline. When he was alone, these qualities became recollections and had to be compounded with his own past.

Outwardly, the week was full of movement and adventure. Each day saw some enterprise undertaken and accomplished. Inwardly, the week brought no special adventure to the Marshalls, except that Billy, through his devotion to Donald, was learning several things. And it brought none, perhaps, to the well-poised Stephen. But it brought many adventures to Donald and Robert. Donald's changes, however, were all in one line, a deepening of the poetic faculty, and a most wholesome increase in poetic sincerity. To Robert the changes came in many lines, and it was unavoidably a week of tumult.

It had been agreed that the last night at Bowness should be spent on the lake. Billy was allowed to sit up until a quite unreasonable hour, for the moon had fallen into the bad habit of rising late. Three small boats carried the party, the division being into the usual pairs:



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Mr. Marshall and Stephen, Billy and Donald, Pauline and Robert. By common consent the boats kept pretty close together. When they got halfway up to Amble-side, oars were put aside and the boats allowed simply to drift. Gradually the talk fell off, even Billy growing less garrulous, until all were silent, lost in the wonder and beauty of the night. Presently Donald began to sing. It was a pleasant tenor voice, of no great power. He chose that beautiful Catholic hymn of adoration, "Ave, Regina Cœlorum." The last cadences trailed off into silence. After an interval Stephen struck up in his conversational bass voice the one song in his repertoire, "Fair Harvard." Robert had no associations with either hymn or song, but he felt vaguely that there was a large gap between them. He had no accomplishments of his own, and even envied Stephen his modest musical part. Robert would have given anything to have been able to respond, and especially if he could have chosen something midway between the "Ave" and the college song. It was plainly incumbent upon his own boat to contribute something. In view of his own disability, he asked Pauline if she could not sing them a song. He had never heard her sing, but it seemed quite improbable that such a superb throat and such strong lungs should not constitute a perfect musical instrument. Pauline's voice was contralto, and though not particularly cultivated, rang out strong and true. She chose "Way down upon the Suwanee River." It seemed to Robert quite the desirable mean between the other selections, and struck him anew with the fine suitableness of all that Pauline did. When the song died away, however, he was conscious that

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the ensuing silence was not so full and rich as the tender silence that followed upon the "Ave, Regina Cœlorum." It was the faintest of passing impressions, but strong enough to make Robert feel that in some subtle way he had not been quite loyal to Pauline.

Pauline sat in the stern of the skiff wrapped up somewhat luxuriously in her Macgregor, the very picture of comfortable contentment. Robert studied her face intently. This was the more possible since Pauline's gaze, though it never avoided Robert, never quite included him. The moon had been for some time under a thin veil of cloud, but now the cloud passed on, and Pauline's face stood out strong and distinct in the white moonlight. It was a noble face, commanding in its high good looks. Robert watched it with a longing that had come to be the sharpest pain. He missed something in the face, and what he missed was the least trace of emotion. He had never been able personally to call forth any, but he had put this down to his own unworthiness, his own lack of power to please so radiant a creature. To-night he missed it in a more impersonal way. Its absence struck him with the same subtle sense of regret that he had felt in the vacant silence that followed Pauline's song. Just then Pauline's gaze happened to fall upon Robert. For one beautiful moment a charming smile illuminated her face, and Robert was again her unquestioning slave.

Presently the oars were resumed, and with more or less intermittent and rather drowsy talk, the little flotilla made its way back to the pier. There were no tender good-nights, save on the part of Billy, who put up a sleepy but plaintive wail that his last night of freedom had been

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spent, and that Donald was going to Berlin, while he, Billy the desolate, was to take himself to Abbotsholme.

On the following morning the little party broke in two: Mr. Marshall and Pauline, with the tearful Billy, turning southward to the land of schools, while our three young friends journeyed over Kirkstone Pass to Penrith and Carlisle. Robert got through the parting more creditably than he anticipated. For one thing, he had the unfailing hopefulness of all young lovers, a hopefulness further strengthened by his sense of unimpaired loyalty; and for another thing, Pauline had asked him to look them up in Paris. She and her father would be there by the latter part of October, and would be registered at Morgan's. In spite of all this brave show, however, Robert was a manifestly poor companion for the rest of the day, and saw little of the beauties of the Pass or even of Ullswater. He woke up from time to time to such insistent facts as stage-coaches, steamboats, luncheons, and railway carriages, but afterwards he could give but a lame account of the whole day.

## CHAPTER VIII

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SOME three weeks later, that is to say about the middle of October, our three young friends found themselves at York. They had done Carlisle, Glasgow, Loch Lomond, and the Trossachs. They had been at Edinburgh and Abbotsford. They had seen Melrose and Durham. Just now they were bent on more cathedrals *en route* to the university towns and London. Robert, at least, considered himself a much-traveled person. His Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have been greatly edified, could she have heard him discuss the relative merits of English and Scottish lakes, or Welsh and Scottish mountains. She would have judged him to have spent his time and money to excellent advantage, could she have listened to his many discourses on cathedral architecture and the distinctive features of Norman, Early English, Decorated Gothic, and Perpendicular.

Not having the proper key, it might have puzzled Miss Pendexter to know why Robert gave such exaggerated preference to Welsh mountains and English lakes over their Scottish counterparts, or why he went in for church architecture with a detail that came dangerously near to being tiresome. Still lacking the proper key, she could not guess that this serious interest in architecture had started out as the too transparent ruse by which Robert tried to beguile his thoughts from traveling in a well-worn and profitless circle. It was a ruse, however, which was transparent only to himself. It quite imposed upon Stephen and

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Donald, who concluded in a brief paragraph of confidential talk that Robert had practically forgotten Pauline. Stephen even went a little further, and allowed himself to wonder whether this apparently unromantic Mr. Pendexter really carried his heart on his sleeve, to be given away and taken back on surprisingly short notice.

When architecture threatened to become exhausted, and Stephen and Donald had more than once cried him mercy, Robert fell back upon history, and fairly bristled with names and dates and statistics. He might be said to have become bookkeeper to Chronos, and to have brought to the task the same unusual accuracy that had made him so valuable to Messrs. Watson and Reed. Robert's apparent immersion in objective interests and his increased readiness to talk on any and every subject rather puzzled Stephen. In the end he put it down as merely another phase in Robert's amazing progress, and came quite to admire the little ex-clerk for his accuracy and dependableness. The intimacy between the two men had been somewhat interrupted by what Stephen now called the Pauline episode, but it had not only been resumed, but had grown apace during the three weeks that separated them from that interruption. Donald's affections were very vague and general in their character. In spite of the sonnet habit, they were essentially impersonal. He loved moods and qualities. If he conceived them to be even momentary embodiments of his pet abstractions, he could apostrophize persons and places with a passion which was more than likely to be misleading to less imaginative persons. He received almost daily letters from the devoted Billy, but easily satisfied himself by sending an occasional picture

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postal in return. The friendship between Donald and Stephen had reached a quiet equilibrium, not likely to be disturbed on either side, but not likely to increase in any marked degree. Between Stephen and Robert, on the other hand, the ties were more human and personal. They grew so quietly and naturally that both men had almost ceased to remark the growth. Occasional incidents and insights proved illuminating, however, and gave them both a pleasant sense of new-found wealth.

And now they had reached York.

The trip had been somewhat more expensive than they anticipated, for English hotels contrive to give much less for the money in both comfort and beauty than similar establishments on the Continent. Donald had so far emerged from poetry as to recognize the fact that his letter of credit was dripping away like melted tallow from a lighted candle. He selected York as the scene of one of those spasmodic efforts after economy which, in the conduct of his affairs, came pretty regularly on top of some comparative extravagance. The friends had long since given up first-class on the railway, and contented themselves with the more limited comfort and better company of the third-class. It was Stephen who inaugurated this reform. His quick common-sense detected the fact that they were missing half the fun and profit of travel, since the first-class carriages offered either no company at all, or else either over-rich Americans or phlegmatic British tourists, who seemed to travel in perpetual fear that they might be spoken to. As all three men were fond of walking, cab hire reduced itself to an insignificant figure. Their one undeniable extravagance had been in the matter of hotels.

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With his ingrained instinct for economy, Robert, the one relatively rich man of the three, would have been quite willing to frequent more modest inns. But Stephen and Donald had stuck out for the very best hotels, Stephen on the frank ground that he liked comfort, and Donald on the less complimentary ground that the best were poor enough. As the hotel bills seemed to be the one reducible item of expense, Donald surprised the others by proposing that at York they should turn their backs upon the stalled ox and take to dinners of herbs. Robert, to his own amazement, and even alarm, found when it came to the point that he was quite indifferent. He felt reproachfully that he was growing very self-indulgent and worldly. In reality, the sum total of his expenses was so well within his income that a few shillings more or less, or even a few pounds, made no perceptible difference. He tried rather unsuccessfully to get up some enthusiasm for Donald's proposed economic reform, and consented to help in selecting a delectable spot from the menagerie of names offered by Baedeker. Stephen promised submission, but resolutely declined any more active part in the conspiracy. After some discussion over the probable merits of the various animals, Donald and Robert hit upon the Stag as an inn that seemed in the guide-book account of it to be sufficiently modest, and when they got there, proved to be more modest than enough. Rather half-heartedly our three young friends filed into the narrow hallway, and deposited their suit-cases in an orderly row upon a tessellated pavement whose grandeur had been for some time a stranger to such plebeian accomplices as soap and water.

A jaunty gentleman in expansive but not immaculate

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linen approached them with a brave show of gayety that deceived no one, not even himself, and inquired what line they were in.

Stephen replied grimly that he hoped they were in the line of promotion, while the other two men stared uncomprehendingly.

"Something genteel, I am sure," said the proprietor. "Very genteel. Jewelry perhaps? or notions? or cigars?"

"Lord, no," answered Stephen. "We're not drummers. We deal in ideas, mostly."

"Ah, professionals," said the proprietor. "I see. Go in for tragedy or comedy?"

"Just now," answered Stephen, in his most judicial manner, "we are going in for tragedy!"

"To be sure," murmured the proprietor. "Honored to have you stop with us. Our gents is mostly in a commercial way. Honored to have your names in our register-book."

Donald and Robert, not being worldly minded, got out their fountain-pens, and were for obliging this urbane personage without further delay; but Stephen, the cautious and prudential, was bent on first seeing the rooms.

With many apologies for taking such distinguished gentlemen up so many flights of stairs, the proprietor mounted to the top of the house, and after several twists and turns in the narrow corridors, threw open the door of a curious bedroom. It was the last room left, he urged, but would doubtless make the gentlemen very comfortable. As a matter of fact, it was something of a feat for them all to crowd in and climb around the encumbering furniture. In the remote, hall-like distance was one window, a



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magnified porthole, which punctured the ill-devised mansard at such height that not even Donald could see out of it. Two beds stood at right angles to the walls, and cut the room up into a series of narrow alley-ways. Over one of the beds, a particularly frowsy-looking bed that suggested urgent need of fresh linen, hung a worked motto in a black walnut frame. The variegated worsteds used in its manufacture made it difficult to decipher, but after some effort Stephen read in a voice saturated with adverse comment, — *Set your Hearts on Things Above*. Stephen looked at the motto and then once more at the bed. He nodded his head judicially, and, followed by the others, made straight for the door. The bewildered proprietor put down the conduct of his guests to the vagaries of professionals. His surprise deepened when at last downstairs, on the tessellated pavement once more, each man grabbed his suit-case and made for the street door. It was only after the last man had muttered a hasty "Good-evening," that the poor proprietor realized that his guests were not his guests.

Once on the street again, Stephen magnanimously offered to take charge of the party and conduct them to the abodes of decency and comfort. Robert readily assented, for the thought of sleeping in such a room as they had just left filled him with dismay. Donald was equally ready, having reached a rapid determination to spend less time in Europe, if need be, rather than practice so uncomfortable a virtue as economy.

A shabby cab having made its appearance, the three men bundled into it. Stephen chose from the other end of the hotel list. The cabman shared the proprietor's doubts

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as to their exact social status, but the hotel once named, he felt reassured, and promptly doubled the fare. Stephen made use of the drive and his companions' present frame of mind to let fall some instructive remarks on true and false economy. The sentiment of the party was too unanimous to allow any discussion.

"I will now hold a little observation class," cried Stephen, gayly. "Who can tell me, in cabby's own words, the name of the hotel to which we are now going?"

"I can," Donald answered. "We'rre goin' to tha Count-ee and Sty-shun Hote-el, Sor!"

"Good ear," said Stephen; "and when we get there, my children, our little essay in economy will have cost us one hour and a half of precious daylight, plus cab hire."

"Let's change the subject," suggested Donald.

Just how the County and Station Hotel would have struck our three young friends had they gone there at once, it were better not to ask, for in reality it is early Victorian in its ugliness; but now, by contrast with tessellated pavements and worsted mottoes, it seemed the height of comfort and elegance. It was with a genuine and hearty sigh of relief that the friends settled down in their pleasant apartments and let the week slip into the past. As yet they had seen nothing of the Minster, for the Stag excursion had stolen the scant remaining daylight, a fact which Donald did not fail to put down on the rapidly growing score against economy.

Robert meant to be up early and catch a glimpse of the Minster before breakfast, but this laudable intention evaporated during the night, and he found himself getting up

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when the others did, and very contentedly sharing their Sunday morning breakfast well on towards ten o'clock.

The dining-room of the County and Station Hotel means to be comfortable, and succeeds in being ugly. Our three young friends were given a small, round table to themselves, so near the centre of the room that it seemed to them that the arriving and departing breakfasters all circled about them and invited observation. To Robert the scene was full of interest, particularly as many of the guests were evidently members of the middle and upper classes. He found himself watching each group as it entered the room and swept past him to the most remote corner available. Each group was different and yet astonishingly the same. It was made up of individuals solidly if not tastefully dressed, manifestly well tubbed, with high color and passive faces, breathing every virtue except graciousness. They all treated the servants as they did the furniture, only with less consideration, since they had to adapt themselves, however unwillingly, to the furniture, while they expected the servants to be constantly adapting themselves to them. Robert watched them, quite fascinated by the different point of view it all indicated.

Presently a stout, choleric-looking gentleman entered the room followed by a timid wife and four stolid-looking children of assorted sizes. The choleric gentleman headed the procession, and soon out-distanced the timid wife and the stolid children, now arranged in order of size, and presumably of age. When he reached the table evidently reserved for him, he sat down in the most desirable place and arranged the table furniture to suit him. When the timid wife approached, he looked up at her over his shoul-

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der in such a contemptuous way that Robert felt sorry for the poor lady. The look seemed to say, "*You* here? *You* hungry? *You* want something to eat? Well, upon my soul, you don't deserve it!" The lady sat down timidly and apologetically, and the four children slipped into their places with the air of creatures trying hard to efface themselves, but not at all sure of their success.

Robert withdrew his gaze and caught Donald's eye coming home from the same little tragedy.

"He's a brute!" Donald exclaimed warmly. "I'd like to lick him here and now."

"Don't believe you could," observed Stephen, laconically, "unless you tired him out, and he lost his wind. He'd puff hard, all right."

"Well, he deserves a good licking," Donald answered; "and the worst of it is, he's not the only one. I'll give a chromo to either one of you, if you can ever show me an Englishman who's polite to his wife!"

"Who'll judge?" asked Stephen.

"You may, lover of English laws and customs, reader of the 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' — you may judge yourself. But you'll not find a single, solitary one."

"Oh, come," said Stephen. "That's rather sweeping. They're doubtless very nice to their wives in private."

"In *private*!" Donald repeated indignantly. "Why not in public also?"

"They're shy of showing any feeling when other people are looking on."

"By all that's great!" ejaculated Donald. "That puffing, red-faced brute shy! That's too delicious. Too modest to show his manners in public lest they be scored up

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to his credit, but in private, — oh, my soul, — so delightful and winsome that the angels look on with bated breath! Well, all I can say is that the wife and kids don't look it."

"Perhaps he's an exception," Robert suggested charitably. "We shouldn't want Americans to be judged by some of the people you could see at the Somerset or the Touraine, or even over here."

"Right you are, little Pen," cried Stephen. "That's sense and reason. The poet's on a rampage, and has a favorite text of his, — the eccentricities of our British cousins."

"All the same," replied Donald, imperturbably, "I'll give a chromo to either of you, if you can ever show me an Englishman who is polite to his wife!"

"Offer something more alluring, sonny," said Stephen, "and we might try harder."

"All right, whatever you wish, — say a dinner at the Carlton, as soon as we get to London, — five courses and any wine you will!"

"Go softly, poet, or you will shock little Pen with your wine and wagers. You've never been at the Carlton, or you would n't be so rash. Your five-course dinner would cost a month's *pension* in Berlin; and the wine, your room rent. Better have lower stakes. We'll bet a big red apple that before we leave York, we'll see a polite Englishman."

"Stupid, I did n't say that. I said an Englishman who was polite to his *wife*! It shall be *any* time before we leave England. And with the big red apple shall go a full and contrite acknowledgment that the loser was mistaken."

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"Agreed," said Stephen; "a big red apple for one and humble pie for the other."

"And meanwhile let us visit the cathedral," Donald suggested, rising.

"The Minster?" Robert asked.

"Oh, bother your fine distinctions."

"Not a bit of it," said Stephen. "Little Pen has given up coffee and spices. Let him have dates and architraves to take their places. He's running the architectural side of this enterprise. If he says it's a Minster, poet, you'd better knuckle down and call it such."

It was not a favorable day to catch first glimpses of so beautiful a building as the York Minster. The sky was overcast, and cold gray clouds scudded along from the northwest. The wind caught up little eddies of dead leaves and dust and sent them scurrying along the road. Particles of paper rushed here and there on unmeaning errands. The three friends buttoned up their overcoats, drew on their gloves, and made a dash across the hotel garden to the staircase leading to the walls. Once on top, they found themselves safe from the dust and dirt, but the wind had added force and made walking something of a gymnastic feat. Dark, slaty gray clouds lay along the horizon, and against this background rose the great stone mass of the Minster, its towers and façades standing out harsh and cold in their over-clear outlines. From the height of the walls, the low houses of the town presented a monotony of chimney-pots, and an interminable expanse of dull slate roofs. The whole effect was one of hopeless and unescapable chilliness.

Robert wondered how it would have seemed had Pauline

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been there, but the thought did not bring him its expected thrill, for he knew at once that the prevailing gloom would have filled her pagan soul with blank despair. She affected to dislike Sunday, and especially the smug English Sunday. The present day, in its raw, Puritanical grayness, would have been intolerable to her. It is even doubtful whether she would have left the hotel.

The wind, and the constant necessity for holding on to their hats, made conversation rather difficult, even for so sturdy a talker as Stephen or so impetuous a one as Donald. It left Robert wholly to his own thoughts, and, try as hard as he would, he could not lighten them a particle. It seemed as if all the dreariness of the landscape entered his spirit and took up its abode there. He had a vague sense of irreparable loss, as if all the warmth and sunshine had gone out of his life, and this cold, depressing grayness had come to take their place. He was glad to have the walk end, to descend the narrow steps from the walls, and wind through the deserted streets to the entrance to the Minster. At the great door they met a young man just coming out. Robert happened to catch a glimpse of his face. It was white and drawn. Great circles shadowed the eyes. When for a moment the young man looked up, the eyes were so full of anguish that Robert almost caught his breath. What struck him most was that the anguish was so profound that it was wholly frank and unconcealed. The time for all evasions and subterfuges had clearly passed. The other men had not seen the face. For Robert, it added the last touch to his own sense of desolation. "Poor soul," he said to himself, "he looks as I feel!" A mist of tears spread over Robert's eyes, partly in pity

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for the troubled stranger, and partly in pity for himself. With the others, he swept into the great Minster, seeing and heeding little that was going on around him.

When Robert came to himself and the mist had cleared from his eyes, he found himself standing in the central aisle of the great nave. The morning service was just beginning. The magnificent organ — perhaps the sweetest in all England — was sounding forth its invitation to worship, first soft and melodious, then appealing and persuasive, finally compelling and triumphant. There was a moment's pause, and the prelude was followed by the deep chords of an ancient Anglican hymn. From the distance came the clear, boyish voices of the choristers. Stronger and stronger the voices grew as the white-robed procession wound its way from the chapter house through the cloister, along the transept, and, with one magnificent final outburst of song, stepped into the stalled quiet of the great choir.

Robert had never been so touched by music. Perhaps he had never been in quite so responsive a mood. The well-ordered music at King's Chapel usually left him dead and cold. But this music seemed to be tearing the heart out of him. The invitation of the great organ had apparently been answered, — worship was realized.

Robert would have liked to kneel on the bare stones of the nave. As it was, he closed his eyes, and the grayness and trouble of the morning walk slipped from him; but not the pathos of it. What slipped away was that poor thing, the sense of self-pity. In its stead was a profound sadness, so impersonal that it gave no hint of being unendurable.



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When the monotonous chant of the invocation ended and the organ and choir sounded their solemn *Amen*, Robert opened his eyes. He was standing by himself. Donald had taken a seat near the wall. Stephen was softly moving about, an open Baedeker in hand. It was only now that Robert really saw the interior of the Minster. The richly colored glass in the windows robbed the light of all grayness, and sent it, in warm radiance, pulsing over the glorious white clustered pillars, the groined roof above, the stone pavement below, the golden pipes of the great organ, the scattered groups of worshipers. The great Minster spoke to Robert through his eyes, as the great organ had spoken to him through his ears. He had never heard that architecture is frozen music, and had the lines recurred to him, he would have quickly denied them, for in its large, warm beauty the Minster seemed to him as alive and palpitating as the music itself. None of the other cathedrals had so touched his spirit. He marveled that the heart of man could have conceived it and the hand of man built it, for it seemed to him to have the bigness and beauty of Nature herself. Robert stood there during the entire service, possessor of a great boon — complete unconsciousness of self. His arms were folded, and his slender body had taken the restful attitude of repose. Many eyes wandered his way from tourists and worshipers alike, for in his expressed reverence, and the fine lines of his pose, he seemed touched by the same beauty as the music and the Minster, the beauty of the spirit. When the organ sounded, Robert closed his eyes and drank in the music as a thirsty man drinks water. During the intervals, when only the monotonous voice of

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the priest and the too distinct patter of roving feet broke the silence, Robert gazed around him open-eyed and absorbed. He did not once change his position. For the moment he lost his appetite for detail and architectural distinctions. By a happy chance, he had stationed himself where he could best appreciate the unity of a great and varied building, and he had no desire to surrender this vantage-ground. At last the service ended. The white-robed procession swept out of the choir, over the stone of nave and transept, into the further recesses of cloister and chapter house. Gradually the clear, boyish voices lost themselves in the distance, and there was the hush of an occupied silence. Robert was not sufficiently familiar with the Anglican service to know that the seemingly vacant air spaces were filled with an inaudible benediction. By some instinct of worship, he remained motionless, his own spirit arrested and hushed. It was only when the final *Amen* rose clear and solemn in the distance that the spell ended and he felt at liberty to move.

Robert looked about him. Stephen and Donald were nowhere to be seen. A curious weariness stole over Robert, and he made his way to a retired seat near one of the great pillars. He rather reproached himself for not looking up his friends and exploring the rest of the Minster with them; but the reproach never grew quite imperative enough to start him into action.

Presently Robert was dimly conscious that two ladies passed in front of him, and stood, somewhat to his own inconvenience, admiring the vista of the south transept. They had their backs turned towards him, and made no impression upon him beyond the fact that they formed two

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dark, obscuring figures against the brightness of the stonework. The younger woman was talking, but in so low a tone that Robert could not understand what she was saying. The voice was too indistinct to be in any case familiar, and yet it vaguely touched some chord in Robert's memory. When the older woman answered, she turned half-way round towards Robert in order to study some other part of the building. Robert could not remember that he had ever seen her before. Her answer took the form of a quotation : —

“He builded better than he knew ; —  
The conscious stone to beauty grew.”

By the time she had finished, Robert was on his feet. It was Sappho's voice, unquestionably hers, the same unique, high-pitched voice that seemed to come from no part of her own person, but from the air above her. As Robert rose, the younger woman turned, and he was face to face with Alicia.

“Why, Mr. Pendexter, how do you do?” said Alicia, extending her hand cordially. “I'm so glad to see you again. Mrs. Costello, this is one of our fellow voyagers on the Republic, Mr. Pendexter. You ought to know each other, for you're almost neighbors. Your family is from Bolton, I think you told me, Mr. Pendexter?”

Robert shook hands with both ladies, and after expressing his pleasure at seeing them, turned to Mrs. Costello and said : “I think Miss Smith has a famous memory, don't you, to recall both my name and birthplace?”

“A better memory than you have, apparently,” answered Mrs. Costello, “since you have already forgotten Miss Frothingham's name.”

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"I never knew it before," said Robert, simply. "We always called her 'Miss Smith.'"

"How very droll! Why did you do that?"

"Because we knew no other name," Robert answered, "and one must have a handle of some sort."

"Did you name all the ship's company in this prosaic fashion?" asked Mrs. Costello.

"No, indeed," said Robert; "only the people we had something to do with." Then he added a little shyly, "The names were n't always prosaic. For example, we called you 'Sappho.' I hope you don't mind?"

Mrs. Costello laughed pleasantly. "How could I mind?" she said. "I think that is a very high compliment. Pray tell me how you chanced to give it to me."

"Don't you remember that last night on the steamer when you recited Mrs. Browning's poem for us? We thought it very kind of you."

"Oh, to be sure. I had quite forgotten," replied Mrs. Costello; "but I do not recall your voice. Are you the young man who repeated some verses of his own and then something of Mr. Arnold's?"

"No; I merely listened. That was my friend, Donald Fergusson."

"I cared for his verses," continued Mrs. Costello. "They were not very smooth, but they seemed to me to have a high seriousness about them, and to promise stronger work in the future. I thought the rest were rather hard on him. But he took it very nicely, as I remember."

"Donald's all right," said Robert, heartily.

"How is he?" inquired Alicia; "and your other friend, Mr. Morse, the young lawyer?"

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"Very well, both of them," replied Robert. "They are in the Minster somewhere. I got dreaming and lost sight of them."

"I hardly wonder," Alicia said. "It's a place meant to dream in. What an astonishingly beautiful service. It was so truly catholic. I felt in touch with all the religions of the world. The division fences of doctrine seemed to crumble away before the music. If it hadn't been for Mrs. Costello, I should have flown off into space. She kept a friendly hold upon me."

"I'm glad you did n't go off," said Robert, "for then I should n't have seen you," and after a second's pause, "or have had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Costello."

The elder lady smiled at this naïve addition. She was rather amused at Robert's provincialism, but she already felt that she liked this young man from Bolton, for under his simple words there was the manifest ring of sincerity.

By unspoken consent they were moving towards the door. The music had ceased, and the great Minster was slowly emptying itself. They had gone but a short distance when they came upon Stephen and Donald. The young men were frankly glad to see Alicia again and to be presented to Mrs. Costello. As the four were chatting together, Robert had an opportunity of studying the two ladies. He now recalled having seen Mrs. Costello on the steamer, but he had not happened to hear her speak except that one evening under the stars, and so did not associate her with Sappho. Robert watched her with friendly curiosity. She was a woman of uncertain age. She might be forty, or she might be sixty. Somehow the question of age did

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not seem to attach itself to Mrs. Costello. No one short of a German petty municipal officer would have thought of asking her age. While Robert was not at all curious about it, he *was* curious to know how one human face could have so much in it. It was a highly sensitive face, rather large for the slender, almost girlish figure that supported it. Dark chestnut hair, perceptibly touched with gray, fell in gentle curves almost to the ears, and gave the face an old-fashioned, but at the same time an attractive setting. Careless observers might have passed Mrs. Costello by without seeing her, but any one who saw her once would never fail to see her again. Robert liked her face immensely, liked its strength and its repose. Somehow he felt that if circumstances allowed, he and Mrs. Costello might be great friends. Mrs. Costello's costume was as unusual as her face and her voice. Her dress was gray, of a shade distinctly lighter than travelers usually affect. It was perfectly plain, and impressed one rather as a drapery than as a dress. The cloak was of the same color and material, and possessed a like amplitude. It was fastened by silk ribbons of a lighter shade, and was further secured by two large amethyst pins, one on each side. The stones were set in silver, and were attached to each other by a curious silver chain. Mrs. Costello's bonnet was the very opposite of a picture hat. It was built upon the principle of self-effacement. It fitted snugly to her head, and gained all its picturesqueness from a soft, opaque veil of silver-gray.

Miss Frothingham was dressed in a plain cloth gown of dark green. The two women had one thing in common, the air of distinction which Donald had already remarked

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in Alicia, but in all external matters they were almost the opposite of each other. Alicia's dress was in taste, but wholly conventional. Her face had its moments of grave repose, when something of her friend's look of other-worldliness stole into it; but ordinarily, and especially when she talked, her face was full of an irrepressible vivacity, so sensitive and mobile that her every thought swept over it like gusts of wind over the responsive surface of a lake. The two friends set each other off capitally. Each gained from the other's presence.

It was a slow progress down the great nave of the Minster, interrupted by frequent pauses to gaze anew at the changing but ever beautiful vistas. There were frequent silences, too, when, by a common instinct, thought seemed more adequate and coherent than words. By no preconceived plan, but merely by a natural activity born of circumstances, the group shifted almost kaleidoscopically, forming and reforming into fresh combinations. Robert found himself talking first to one lady and then to the other; not infrequently to Stephen or Donald. At the west entrance there was a final pause and lingering survey. Then the party swept out into the windy grayness of the streets.

Robert was keenly alive to the contrast, but the peace and elation that had come to him under the spell of the service had not spent themselves, and he rather enjoyed the sense of battling against the wind.

A two-wheeler was waiting for the ladies. They regretted its limited capacity, and that they could not pick up the three friends also. They would be lunching in their own rooms, they said, but hoped that the three men

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would be their guests at seven o'clock dinner. It was Mrs. Costello who added the detail that she would bespeak a large enough table. Stephen bethought himself to ask if they had no instructions for the cabby.

"Yes, thank you so much," said Mrs. Costello. "I had quite forgotten it. Tell him, please, to drive slowly around the Minster three times, and then return to the hotel by the longest and most circuitous route he can devise. We shall be wanting to get the air."

The ladies started off, and the three friends turned to their own plans. They decided in a briefer way to follow Mrs. Costello's scheme, going around the Minster once and then wandering through the narrow streets towards the County and Station Hotel. The wind made them avoid the walls.

"Let's go round the Minster in the opposite direction," suggested Robert, "so we may not seem to be copying Mrs. Costello too closely."

"Not a bit of it," objected Stephen. "If we do that, we shall surely meet the ladies, face to face, and they will have to speak to us, while if we go in the same direction, they can only see our backs as they pass us, and can go on with a conversation that, by Jove, I'd like to hear!"

"Wise as a serpent," commended Donald. "I believe, little Pen, that the judge is growing subtle. It's a good thing for poets to be subtle, but not for judges. We must head him off, or he may lose the judgeship."

Robert laughed, and suggested that in such a case Stephen must not be allowed to talk to Mrs. Costello. Then he turned and asked, "Why did you want to know



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what they are saying? Do you think they are talking about us?"

"Lord, no," answered Stephen, quickly; "they are talking about something bigger and much more worth while."

Presently the two-wheeler passed them on its second round, and then the three friends lost sight of it, as they themselves had completed their circuit and were starting for the hotel.

Our three young friends lunched together, and then separated with rather vague plans for home letters, reading, and those other quiet occupations which travelers sometimes allow themselves as great luxuries in the more strenuous business of sight-seeing.

Robert went directly to his own room. He had no home letters to write. He had written to the cousins at Bolton twice since he had been away, and had already astonished them as well as himself. It had never occurred to him to write to either of the partners of the firm of Messrs. Watson and Reed, coffee and spice merchants, nor had he any inclination to write to any of his former fellow clerks. Dennis Sullivan excepted, he knew that he never wanted to see any of them again. Robert had several books to read, but they were all improving, of the guide-book order of literature, and had no attractions for his present mood. He wandered up and down the room, the very picture of restlessness. Finally he drew his chair up to the window, and sat there listlessly looking out over the dull town, and towards the spires of the beautiful Minster. He recalled the elation of the morning, but it seemed a long way off and quite unrelated to himself. It had all

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taken place, but even in his memory he seemed a mere spectator of the emotion. In spite of himself, the grayness of the day had taken possession of his spirit, and he was consciously miserable. In addition, all the New England ancestors were in revolt. They told him, one and all, that with such a princely income and in such a spot, — which they themselves would have been only too pleased and too grateful to have been allowed by Providence to visit, — he was a poor creature indeed not to be supremely happy. Robert had been learning of late to stand out against these family ghosts, and had several victories to his credit; but in moods like the present, he had no fight in him, and the ancestors had him quite at their mercy. Their company, however, counted just now for as little as their counsels. What Robert was chiefly conscious of was a desolating and unutterable loneliness. He pictured Pauline happy in her father and Billy; Stephen as the intimate friend of Donald; Miss Frothingham obviously satisfied with the rare comradeship of Mrs. Costello. He alone seemed solitary and wretched. He was too inexperienced to know that from this same nostalgia, this homesickness of the spirit, more than half the world is suffering; that it is worse than poverty, or illness, or disaster; but that, like them, it is the pathway to eternal peace. Just now he felt only the pain of it, a pain so drenching and terrible that his spirit absolutely rebelled against it, and he symbolized his rebellion by once more pacing furiously up and down the room. Neither Doane Street nor Pinckney Street would have recognized in this passionately rebellious creature the docile Robert Pendexter of its late acquaintance.

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When Robert felt that he could endure the pain no longer, he turned on the light, and sat down to the writing-table. He persuaded himself that he knew the cause of all his trouble, and also the one remedy. Soon nothing was heard but the rapid scratching of his pen, as he threw aside sheet after sheet of the longest personal letter he had ever written in all his life.

## CHAPTER IX

### ROBERT'S LOVE-LETTER

COUNTY AND STATION HOTEL, YORK,  
Sunday, October fifteenth.

DEAR MISS MARSHALL: — I have no right to send you this letter, even to write it, perhaps not even to think it. It would not be strictly true if I said that I could not help writing it, for I suppose we can always help doing what we do. But it is true that, whatever happens, I do not want to help writing it. Even if you are offended and resentful, it seems to me that I must speak out and tell you what is in my heart. But I think I know you too well to believe that you will be offended. What I am most afraid of is that you will be indifferent. Dear Miss Marshall, dear Pauline, please read this letter with an open heart. Forgive its poor expression and stupidities, and just say to yourself, "It is a life-and-death matter to Mr. Pendexter. He was at least my friend for a short time, and I must take a real interest in what is so important to him." You are so big and generous, I know you will do this for my sake and read to the end. I was never in love before. I never saw a woman that I wanted to marry or even to be well acquainted with. Mr. Fergusson says this a terrible confession, and that I ought to be ashamed of it, for I am already thirty-four. But it is the truth. And if I ever wanted to tell any one the truth, I want to tell it to you. I always thought of myself as an old bachelor, and I meant to be one always. Just the thought of being married fright-

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ened me, for I did not know what it was to care for any one enough to want to be with them always. When I went to Gorphwysfa, I thought I was a very happy man, and a very lucky one, too. I had enough money to live on. I had got well much faster than I thought I ever could. It seemed to me that a whole year in Europe was just what I wanted, and all I wanted. The only thing that bothered me at all was that Mr. Morse had to go back to Boston this month. You know what happened to me at Gorphwysfa, and how I got deeper and deeper in love every moment we were together at Bowness. But you do not know just how wonderful it all was, for I did not know myself, then. I did not know at first what had happened to me. I suppose I did not know, never having been in love before. My cousins at Bolton used to read a lot of novels. I guess they were pretty sentimental. At least our aunt said they were, and tried to make the girls stop reading them. But they wouldn't stop. They got their ideas of love out of the novels, I suppose, for the young men at Bolton were all afraid of my Aunt Matilda and did not come to see the girls, or at least not often. But Priscilla and Mattie believed in love at first sight, and when the right man came along, they said they expected to know it right off. Martha was not so sure, and she and I used to laugh at the others a lot, and say it was stuff and nonsense. But I was all wrong, for I did not know one little thing about it. Dear Pauline, I fell in love with you at first sight. I mean at the dinner-table. I did not really see you out in the hall before the fire, so I do not count that time. And since then, I have loved you more and more, until now it just seems as if I could not get on without you. I do not know

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how you feel. I do not see, honest, how you could care anything for me, now. But perhaps if you know how it is with me, you might think it over, and then, some time, you might come to care for me just a little, and then a little more, and at last enough to make you willing to marry me. Oh, Pauline, if you only could, I should be just made up! I would do my best to make you happy. It seems to me I could, if you would only let me try. Won't you let me try, Pauline? Don't just put me aside and say it is no use. I would not bother you for the world, and I promise you sure that I won't bother you, but I could not stand it to be just put aside without a chance. Please think it all over, and try to care for me just a little bit to start with. I don't ask much at first. Only keep me in mind, and say to yourself softly, "He loves me, he loves me, how he loves me!" If you will do that, I will be perfectly contented. And I won't write you another letter, honor bright, I won't, if you say not, and I won't try to see you until we get to Paris in November. You promised that I might see you in Paris, so I am sure of that much. I feel that I must see you then, even if you don't want to see me. I feel that I can't stay away any longer than that. But oh, Pauline, I want you to be glad to see me, if only a tiny bit, and to give me a chance. It seems out of all reason to think that you could ever care for me, but somehow I feel that if you would let me try, I could make you care for me. I know I have not much to offer you, looking at it just coldly. I am not handsome, or clever, or well educated. I know all this. I am not even very strong. I am just a dull country boy that has lived in Boston for a time and been a clerk in a wholesale house.

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I am not rich, either, not as your father would count it. My income is not nearly as big as yours. Mine is only a little over six thousand a year, and I suppose will never be any bigger. But I know you don't care about being rich, and I don't either. I am a good deal older than you are. I don't know how old you are, of course, but I know that you are still a young girl. I was thirty-four last July, on the 17th. But I am really not so old as that. It seems as if I were only twenty-five. I have just begun to live. I think in one sense that you are older than I am, for you have always lived. When I think of this, I feel a little hopeless. I know very well that there is a great difference in our lives. You have always had everything, and until recently I have had nothing. I have lived a very dull life, how dull I did not know until just the other day, when I began to wake up. I am not awake yet, not nearly so wide awake as you are. But right here, dear Pauline, I am full of hope. Something tells me that I shall win out, and shall reach the bigger life that I am just beginning to see. I do not know what this something is that is being born inside of me. I should call it a soul, but I know that you don't like that word. Whatever it is, though, I am very sure about it. You will not misunderstand me, Pauline, and think that I am a boaster. I know what a commonplace fellow I am now, but I shall not be always. With your help, I could be more what I want to be, —

Here Robert broke off suddenly. Was this quite true? Could Pauline help him to be the sort of a man that he wanted to be? He read the letter over with a growing doubt in his heart. It had been written in a great heat.

It had been true, every word of it, as he wrote, until he came to the last part. This sounded labored and floundering. Again he read the whole letter through. It began to seem to him just what it was, — a great cry of loneliness. It was loneliness, not love, that had prompted this one-sided appeal for companionship. Robert began to realize that all through the letter he had been thinking of himself, and not of Pauline; that he had been shockingly selfish. And even here, when it came to the supreme moment, the time when he had alluded to the deepest matter of all, to that growth of a soul, whose birth pains he was already beginning to feel, he had gone miserably lame and platitudinous, and had ended by being not even sincere. He could not truthfully say that Pauline could help him in the great way that he had said she could. Pauline was undoubtedly superb — superb in health and poise; but to one side of life she was absolutely deaf and dumb and blind. And it was the very side of life to which his own nature was just beginning to awaken. She would have been bored by the morning's service, and would have utterly failed to understand his own ecstasy. It was doubtful whether she would even have been interested in the Minster itself merely as a building, or in the music merely as sweet and solemn sound.

It struck Robert that perhaps Pauline was too strong, if such a thing were possible, had perhaps too perfect health, and needed a touch of suffering to awaken the soul within her. And he thought very tenderly and reverently that were Pauline a mother, perhaps the solemn suffering of motherhood, and the appeal of the child, would quicken Pauline's heart-beat and she would see.



As soon as Robert shifted his point of view and began to think of Pauline's side of the question, he began to see with fatal clearness that his own love, or any that he might feel, could not be the liberator, that Pauline could not respond to it. As he put himself out of the question, and saw only Pauline, he realized, as with a startling illumination, that Pauline had her own needs, — needs not satisfied by either her father or Billy; needs not to be satisfied by one of his own negative and hesitating temperament. But illuminating as the thought was, it was not comforting. A great wave of feeling swept over Robert and left him submerged and gasping. Remote as he felt Pauline to be, he could not help holding out to her the hands of the spirit. A great yearning filled his heart. He buried his face in his hands. His slender frame was shaken by dry, tearless sobs.

It was in this position that Stephen found him when, a few moments later, he entered the room to see if Robert were ready for dinner. Stephen gave no sign that he detected any trouble, and Robert was grateful to him for the assumed blindness. There was an added tenderness in Stephen's voice, however, which told Robert of his keen sympathy.

"Come, little Pen," Stephen said lightly, "it's time to dress. Have you forgotten that we are to dine with Sappho and Miss Frothingham?"

Robert started up guiltily, for he had quite forgotten the invitation. It was almost seven now, so Stephen remained and helped him jump into his dinner-clothes. Donald soon joined them, and they got downstairs just in time not to keep the ladies waiting. Robert had the power

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of quick recovery. He had been very genuinely in the depths of despair. But once more with his friends, he felt warmed and comforted, and took his share in the dinner-talk so successfully that Stephen fancied himself mistaken in his friend's earlier mood, and almost came to believe that he had caught him merely napping instead of agonizing.

Miss Frothingham watched Robert with renewed interest. She sensed some radical change in the inexperienced young man who had seemed to her, on the steamer, to be possessed of a certain charm, but quite too crude and boyish to be genuinely interesting. She had never thought of presenting any of the young men to Mrs. Costello.

It chanced that Robert sat next to Mrs. Costello, while Alicia had Stephen on one side of her, and Donald on the other. This arrangement suited Robert as well as any. His very indifference gave an easy distinction to his manners, which he could never achieve in more self-conscious moments. It also gave him a certain leadership, which would have struck him as highly presumptuous had he stopped to think about it. If Mrs. Costello spoke, Robert quite naturally answered her. If Alicia spoke, he did the same. If either Stephen or Donald made a remark not directly addressed to one of the ladies, it was Robert who took it up and replied to it. As a result of these unconscious tactics, all the talk was soon directed towards Robert. He met the situation without knowing that he was doing it. An outsider would have said that it was Robert who was giving the dinner-party, and that he was acquitting himself most admirably. They might further have thought that it was a chance meeting, welcome, it is true,

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to all, but with Robert on one side and the other four on the other. They seemed ranged up in this fashion, for Robert spoke as deferentially, and it must be confessed as distantly, to the men as to the ladies.

Stephen chuckled to himself to see this erstwhile bashful young man carrying things off quite in the grand manner, and doing it so innocently. He wondered whether the mood would last out the dinner. He took it to be a somewhat feverish reaction after the undoubted despondency of the afternoon, and in spite of his own amusement, he felt a little anxious about his friend.

Robert was so manifestly master of ceremonies that the waiters, who are not all stupids, but really applied psychologists of considerable insight, brought the plates and dishes to him, even asked deferentially if he would dress the salad himself, or have it dressed outside. Robert took all these arrangements quite as a matter of course, dressed the salad as he had seen his cousins at Bolton do it, on the rare occasions when his Aunt Matilda allowed herself this luxury, and talked on with as much unconcern as if he were not meanwhile counting out salt, paprika, vinegar, and olive oil.

This unconscious display on Robert's part had a quite different effect on each one of the party. Both Mrs. Costello and Alicia were women of large social experience, and knew so many types of men that they could usually classify a man without so much as trying. But both were now puzzled. Mrs. Costello mistook the ease of manner for a large worldliness, which was constantly belied by a certain freshness of view that spoke of a curiously unspoiled nature. Had she herself been a smaller woman,

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she might not quite have liked it to be put so completely aside as hostess. But she was not in any way small. Her one concern was to have the dinner go well, and since it was going famously, she was wholly satisfied. With Alicia the case was different. She realized such a change in Robert that she felt completely at sea with regard to his real self, thinking at one moment that he must be acting a part, at another that she had probably been singularly unobservant on the steamer, and had probably not troubled to know what he was. It never occurred to Alicia that in the meanwhile such strong influences had been playing upon Robert that in reality he *was* a different and unknown person.

Donald's attitude, like Stephen's, was one prolonged chuckle, but wholly devoid of Stephen's solicitude. Donald was entirely conscious of the metamorphosis taking place in Robert, although he quite failed to divine the cause. He watched the unfolding in precisely the same spirit that he would have watched a play. He even planned a verse, to be called "The Awakening," but abandoned it on recognizing that as yet he had seized upon no dramatic motive strong enough to account for the thing itself.

Stephen, of course, came the nearest to a true diagnosis, because he of all had the deepest affection for the man. He felt both anxious and interested. He more than half guessed the significance of the scene in Robert's room that afternoon, and realized the hopelessness of it. This made him anxious, for a certain experience of his own some six years before had taught him what such pain meant. But he was even more interested, for his young

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friend had made such astonishing progress in the social arts that Stephen could only wonder what the end would be.

If Robert had known that he was the subject of so much speculation on the part of his fellow diners, he would have relapsed into an embarrassed silence that would have added still more to their perplexity. But no one betrayed more than a polite interest in the current talk. At the conclusion of the dinner, they went up to Mrs. Costello's drawing-room. It had not occurred to either Mrs. Costello or Alicia to ask if the men smoked. Stephen and Donald chafed a little at the deprivation, and not even the coffee brought them quite to their accustomed level of after-dinner contentment. As Robert never smoked, he was not bothered by any unfulfilled desires, and continued to be the one most at ease. He was rather quieter than at dinner, for he began to realize that he had been doing more than his share of the talking.

When they had got well settled in the drawing-room, Robert had a good opportunity to turn the talk over to Alicia. He had noticed with pleasure that she wore the superb jewel that he had so much admired on the Republic. The jewel was so unique that Robert felt sure that it must have a history. Partly to satisfy his own interest, and partly to make good his escape from further talking, he turned to Alicia and said: "If it won't be rude, Miss Frothingham, I should much like to ask the history of the jewel you are wearing. It seems to me the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I am sure that it must have a history."

Alicia quickly put her hand up to the jewel, and

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looked down at it with the indulgent, devouring look that people give only to possessions they care a great deal for. "You are quite right," she said; "it *has* a history. I will tell it to you with pleasure, if Mrs. Costello does n't mind hearing it still another time."

"I always enjoy hearing it," said Mrs. Costello, quickly, in her curious, high-pitched voice. "You know that, my dear, without asking. I really believe you like to make me say it."

"She's a guileful one, Miss Frothingham is," threw in Stephen, in a judicial tone.

"I'm not at all guileful," responded Alicia, protestingly, "and you don't deserve to hear the story. But I'll tell it just for the sake of the others."

"Please do," said Stephen. "I should hate to have the others lose it just because I've been naughty. It would n't be fair!"

Alicia laughed. "You are quite incorrigible. But I shall go on. When I was in India, a couple of years ago, I spent several weeks with some English friends who were stationed at Jaipur, in the native state of Rajputana. You may chance to know what a place for gems it is. They are brought there from all over India, even from Ceylon. One afternoon an Indian gentleman called on my friends, and it fell to me to talk to him. I think we must have chatted for nearly two hours, and all the time about India. I had never seen the man before. When he finally left, he took this pale blue sapphire out of the folds of his turban, and begged that I would accept it as a souvenir of our talk. It is very valuable, and as you see, quite flawless. Naturally I declined to accept it. I thanked him

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over and over again. Then I asked him, out of sheer curiosity, why he wanted to present so magnificent a gem to me — an entire stranger. The tears came into his eyes. ‘It is because you *love* India,’ he said.” Alicia paused a moment, and then hurried on. “I do love India, passionately, but there are others who love her quite as much, and have done so much more for her. I could not take such a gift, and from a man I had never seen before. So, once more, I absolutely declined —”

“Oh, that was too bad!” broke in Robert, impulsively. “It would have given the man so much pleasure. I know just how he would have felt!”

“That was what my English friends said,” continued Alicia. “They told me that he was a very poor man. This sapphire was the last article of any great value that he still owned. But for some reason, he would never sell it. If I had accepted it as a gift, they said, it would have made him very happy. I was leaving Jaipur the next afternoon. In the morning, the Indian gentleman called again, and this time on me. He only stopped a few moments. When he went away, he took out the sapphire and urged me to take it. I could not get out of it. So, very reluctantly, I did. ‘It belongs to you,’ he said, ‘because you love India.’ I do not know that I even thanked him. I have never been so touched by any gift. When I looked up and tried to thank him, he was gone.”

“That was right,” cried Donald, enthusiastically. “It made the gift a poem!”

“But surely,” said the practical Stephen, “the stone was n’t mounted in this wonderful fashion when your Hindu gentleman handed it over.”

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"Of course not," Alicia answered. "That is the second part of its history. When I came back to Europe, I brought the stone with me. But I really did n't quite know what to do with it. I simply could n't have it mounted in the usual commonplace way. So I kept it for two or three months. While I was in Paris, I met Lalique. Perhaps you know his work? He is truly an artist. They say that some day he will be ranked with Benvenuto Cellini. I told Lalique the story of the sapphire. Then I gave it to him, and asked him to mount it for me in the most beautiful way he could. I thought I had lost it. Lalique kept it for a whole year. But when he brought it back, it was the glorious thing I have here. The idea is wholly Lalique's. I wish it were mine. I should be so proud of it. Every part of it has a meaning. The sapphire itself stands, of course, for hope. The basis is of rock crystal. See how wonderfully clear it is. That means purity. The angels leaning on the sapphire represent the winged character of all aspiration. They are made of translucent enamel. Lalique invented it himself. Do you see how beautifully carved they are? The wings are just common horn, but notice how very right the color is, just the sort of grayish green to go with the smoke-blue of the enamel. It is a fancy of Lalique's to bring such things together. He likes the contrast and the range of color. I think he's quite right about it. I like to feel that commonplace, earthy things can be transformed by superb workmanship into proper company for the rarest gem. Before I could ask Lalique how much he meant to charge me, he said to me, 'I want you to accept this on the same terms that you granted the Indian gentleman, and for the same or a simi-



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lar reason. I give it to you because you love France! I ought to be a very grateful woman, ought I not? Well, I really am. I never saw those men before, either of them, and I have never seen them since. I value my jewel as if it were a talisman. It is so very beautiful, and it always seems to me the very symbol of human generosity. It's an interesting history, is it not?"

"It sure is," said Stephen, enthusiastically. Then he asked to be allowed to examine the jewel. Alicia unclasped it from the chain and handed it to him. Stephen held the jewel with great care, apparently, but in an unguarded moment, as he looked up in his talk, the jewel slipped from his fingers. Robert had foreseen such a possibility, and sat with his own hands outstretched for rescue. He darted forward just in time to catch the jewel and save it from falling to the floor.

Alicia made no outcry, but she started involuntarily and turned a trifle pale. A moment later, when Robert handed the jewel back to her uninjured, a wave of almost painful color swept over her face, and she said eagerly, "Oh, thank you so much. Now I shall associate your name with my treasure. An Indian gave it to me; a Frenchman mounted it for me; an American saved it for me!"

"The Germans say, do they not, that everything perfect comes in threes?" suggested Mrs. Costello.

"To make the story quite complete," said Robert, lightly, "we ought all to have been strangers. I am almost sorry that you knew me before to-day."

"I'm not sure that I did," Alicia answered quickly. "At any rate, I cannot thank you enough."

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"Oh, don't mention it," replied Robert. "Thank *you* very much for telling us the story. It is tremendously interesting."

Stephen had been too chagrined to say anything, but now he spoke up. "And next time, Miss Frothingham, when a man whose fingers are all thumbs asks to handle the jewel, don't let him. It is n't safe!"

"I won't," Alicia answered.

Robert rose to go, and Stephen and Donald felt obliged to rise with him. The ladies protested that it was still very early, but Robert ignored the remark as a mere formality, and much against their will, dragged his two friends off with him. As the three young men went towards their own rooms, both Stephen and Donald reviled poor Robert for breaking up the party so early. The poet was particularly outspoken, for he had been much impressed by both women, Mrs. Costello not less than Alicia, and wanted to see more of them. As Robert turned in to his own room, Donald called after him, "If you're writing to those old cousins of yours at Bolton, just tell them for me that you've been mighty disagreeable!"

Robert's retort came on the instant. "They'd never believe anything so improbable!"

"Snappy work, little Pen," cried Stephen, with a chuckle; "you're coming on. And say, old man, I'm eternally grateful to you for catching that Franco-Asiatic bubble. I don't care to think how I'd feel if I'd broken it!"

"Don't try," Robert answered cheerily. "I felt in my bones that you *were* going to drop it, and was ready for you. So it was all right. Good-night. And say good-night to the poet."

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Robert closed his door for the night. But he had no intention of writing to his cousins at Bolton. He meant to finish his letter to Pauline. He took off his dinner-coat and got into his more comfortable gray sack-coat. He sat down at the writing-table full of fire and resolve. He gathered up the sheets that he had written during the afternoon, and after a moment's hesitation, put them one side. Then he got out some fresh paper and prepared to start a new letter. He put a fresh pen in the holder, and tried the point on his finger-nail. Finally he dipped the pen into the ink, and got as far as the date, "Sunday, October fifteenth." He toyed with the pen a moment. Then he put it down suddenly and buried his face in his hands. He realized once more that there was nothing to say.

It was fully an hour before Robert lifted his head. His face showed the storm through which he had been passing. Slowly he gathered up the closely written pages of Pauline's letter and very carefully and deliberately tore them into tiny fragments. He put them all into the fire, and watched until the last fragment had burned to ashes before he undressed and went to bed.

## CHAPTER X

### INWARD VOYAGES

ROBERT heard nothing from the Marshalls. Donald had frequent letters from the worshipful Billy, but they were full of the life at Abbotsholme, and seldom so much as mentioned either Pauline or his father. Robert expected no letters, nor did he expect to see Pauline until he reached Paris. But his experiences at York had made him more at sea than ever. Between Bowness and York he had been restless and disturbed, often a very poor traveling companion, as he had to confess to himself, but at least he knew, or fancied that he knew, just where he stood. He believed himself to be hopelessly in love with Pauline. He accepted his own state of mind quite as an established fact, and never so much as questioned it. It was too distinct an experience to leave him in any doubt. This precipitate, perfectly unreasonable falling in love with a comparative stranger had always amused him in other men, and had even filled him with mingled contempt and pity. It was something, he assured himself, that would never happen to him. And now, without warning, it was his own portion in all its bitter sweetness, and had indeed become the major element in all the wonderful experience growing out of this fateful journey to Europe.

So much had happened since he fell sick in Boston and had suddenly become a man of leisure, that when most perplexed, Robert felt momentarily sure that it was all a dream, and that if he aroused himself a bit, he would

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waken at his old desk in Doane Street, and find himself poring over half-added columns of figures. But even when the feeling was strongest and the perplexity greatest, he never did arouse himself in just that way, for in spite of all the pain, he knew perfectly well that he liked the enchantment, and at the bottom of his heart had no desire to have done with the dream. He would have changed it, if he could, he would have had some assurance of love on Pauline's part, but he would not have given up the dream for any consideration he could imagine. It was such a glorious thing to love Pauline, whatever her own feelings might be, that life, without this supreme emotion, seemed too poverty-stricken for words. Whatever happened, this great happiness was at least a secure possession.

At times, Robert was even aware of a high serenity. In the midst of his restless longing there came this feeling of fulfilled desire. He could at least love, — no one could take that from him. He even assumed that Pauline would never care for him, but that he would still nurse his own love, keep her image bright in his heart, and be able to meet a quiet, lonely old age with an inner happiness that would make it endurable, even blessed.

These periods of serene resignation never lasted very long. They usually came when he was alone, generally in the silence of the night, when they half took the form of dreams. Between them came the storm and stress periods, times when Robert found it hard to live up to his own ideal of politeness and be sufficiently alive to the existence of his two young friends to be even a passable companion. Ecclesiastical architecture had proved itself a safe refuge, but there were whole days when it failed him utterly. It

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was highly fortunate that the supply of cathedrals seemed to keep up indefinitely. Occasionally they were inadequate as distractions from his own absorbing thought. But they served to administer to the emotional side of Robert's nature, which at thirty-four was just beginning to be aroused, and which at times threatened shipwreck.

It was curious, but perhaps wholly natural, that any great elation, such as that brought about by the glorious beauty of York Minster and the subtle charm of the service, was apt to be followed by an abyss of loneliness and despair. The very heights of his ecstasy deepened the reaction of pain. It seemed to Robert cruel in the extreme that these flights of the spirit had to be accomplished always alone; that when they ended and the need for expression, the cry of the palpitating soul, grew most imperative, there was nothing but loneliness and void. In these entirely new spiritual excursions, Robert had no compass and no guide. He could not know that this bewildering mood, at once so blissful and so suffocating, is not alone the mood of the lover, but quite as much the mood of the artist, the prelude to all worldly creation. Had he known how to write or paint, had he understood music or sculpture, had he been given to the simplest arts of invention, he would have found an outlet for his pent-up mood, and in giving expression to his imprisoned spirit, he would have gained light and freedom.

But this side of things was quite outside of Robert's experience. Until he came to Europe, he had not even been aware that he was so keenly alive to beauty. His analysis of his own moods had not gone far enough to disclose the artist temper. The idea of creating beauty had

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never been suggested to him. Had it been, he would doubtless have scouted it as the veriest mirage, and honestly enough proclaimed his inability and helplessness.

Between Bowness and York Robert had been filled with a vague unrest. He had ascribed it all to one thing, to the foregone conclusion that Pauline neither loved him nor could ever be expected to love him. At any moment during that time, when he was wandering among cathedrals or doing Scottish lakes, could he have been assured to the contrary, he would have been perfectly happy, and would have asked no more of fate. He would have counted himself favored of the gods. But this assurance never came. The more Robert brooded over the situation, the less probable it seemed to him that it would ever come. And yet the dream continued, even grew in intensity, until at York it reached its climax. It seemed to Robert as if he must risk everything and that he must know. But at the very flood, when he came to pour out his heart to Pauline on paper, and to lay bare his inmost soul, the wave of his great emotion had been broken and spent. Robert found that he was not even sure of his own love, and that at the supreme moment he had nothing sincere to say. Such a result had been too wholly unexpected to be taken without question. As we have seen, he had refused to accept it, and after Mrs. Costello's dinner-party, had returned to his letter with an ardor even greater than when he began it. But it was of no use. In that silent, motionless hour when Robert sat at the writing-table with his face buried in his hands, battling against what seemed to him a hideous truth, he had been worsted at every turn. Unwillingly, reproachfully even, he had slowly admitted to himself that

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his dream had been a mistake, and that down in his heart of hearts he did not love Pauline; that what he felt had been a great loneliness, but that it had not been love. When the last fragment of his poor love-letter had turned to ashes, he knew that he had accepted the truth, and that he must face it. Having decided that Pauline could never come to care for him, it would have been only reasonable if Robert had felt a great relief and a sense of renewed peace when he came to realize that neither did he really care for her. But the human heart is not reasonable. On the contrary, it is highly unreasonable. Instead of peace and a renewed and more genuine interest in life, Robert felt in the days that succeeded York a still more desperate unhappiness.

Our three young friends left Mrs. Costello and Miss Frothingham at York, and journeyed southward towards Oxford. It had been agreed that some time within a week they should all meet at the Mitre. The young men traveled slowly, taking in Ely and Lincoln, but it was difficult for Robert even to feign an interest in ecclesiastical architecture, much less to feel it. In spite of all the pain of the experience, it seemed to Robert that he had been supremely happy when he thought that he loved Pauline. He had had no conception of the desolation of his present state of mind. With love, or it might be the illusion of love, taken out of life, it hardly seemed to him worth while to go on living. In vain the New England conscience reminded him of duty and all the grave responsibilities of life. A little earlier, and it would have added the responsibilities of wealth; but Robert had now ceased to regard six thousand a year as wealth, and had come to



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look upon his present income as a very modest affair after all, and belonging more properly, in part at least, to his cousins at Bolton, rather than to himself.

To have loved, and then to have stopped loving, is for all of us a tragedy of the first order. To Robert it was well-nigh insupportable. His evident distress alarmed Stephen, and in the absence of any visible cause for it, made him think that Robert's recovery had perhaps been too rapid to be quite permanent. Both Stephen and Donald urged Robert to see a physician, but he assured them that it was only a temporary set-back, and that he would soon be all right again. He did agree, however, to take his sight-seeing more moderately. Stephen would not consent to leave Robert alone. He sent Donald off on all sorts of improving expeditions, but remained himself at the hotel with Robert, reading to him, or chatting to him about social and political matters at home. It must be confessed that the sight-seeing had begun to pall on Robert. He enjoyed this quiet intercourse with a well-informed and thoroughly wholesome mind much more than the ceaseless round of action upon which they had all so lately been embarked. At Oxford he was especially listless. It had been one of the places that he most wanted to see, but when they got there, not even Stephen's and Donald's enthusiasm could warm his own interest beyond a very tepid point. There was, indeed, physical cause for this depression aside from the emotional crisis through which Robert had been passing. His rapid recovery had been largely due to the open-air life on the steamer, and to the bracing atmosphere of the Welsh and Scottish uplands. The midland and southern counties of England offered no

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such tonic. In Oxford itself one can take but a melancholy and retrospective view of life. The surrounding marshes rob the air of any contemporary ardor, and account in some measure for the conservative and reactionary attitude which characterizes Oxford thought.

As soon as he could, Robert aroused himself and took a more active part in all the sight-seeing. Left to himself, he would hardly have made the effort, but when he realized that Stephen was remaining at home with him such a large part of the day, and would remain in spite of all he could say, the New England conscience got hold of a powerful lever, and spurred him on to much of his old-time activity.

For Stephen's sake, and to head off inquiries which might easily be embarrassing, Robert expressed as lively an interest in the beautiful old town as he possibly could. And, indeed, in spite of the moist, depressing climate, he found much to stir him in the penetrating, abiding beauty of Oxford. He yielded himself to it unreservedly, allowing the intoxicating langour of the place to still his unrest and to lull him into a spiritual slumber.

By the time Mrs. Costello and Miss Frothingham arrived at the Mitre, Robert had so far recovered his poise that he was genuinely glad to see them, and could enjoy the new life and fresh interests which they imported into the little circle. Neither woman took the place of Pauline, in those halcyon days which now seemed removed by months instead of by weeks, but both women made Pauline seem more and more remote, as if she belonged to a chapter long since completely closed. Robert's own thoughts seldom dwelt upon Pauline. He would hardly have wel-

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comed a letter from her now, or even been glad to see her. He bore her no ill-will, as indeed he had no right to, for her part in his sufferings had been both unintentional and unconscious. It was merely that she had no active part in his life, and consequently seldom came into his thoughts. In a way his thoughts were less wholesome, for in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, they dwelt for a time almost wholly upon himself. What he was chiefly conscious of was a great and overwhelming loneliness. He had had a comrade, albeit imaginary, and he had lost her. He felt that he would never find another comrade ; that he had missed something essential out of life.

Meanwhile Robert puzzled both Mrs. Costello and Alicia. They were even more puzzled than at York. Robert tried to act the part of an agreeable friend, for he had a deep respect for both women, and felt instinctively that they had much to give him. But his effort was wholly devoid of any gallantry, for it included Stephen and Donald quite as genuinely as it did the two ladies. He was considerably more successful than he himself fancied. As at York, his very detachment added a distinction to his manners which gave them all the quality of a rare breeding. What Robert was trying to do was in fact to ignore himself, and that is at bottom of all that is finest in manners and morals. Robert was not doing it on any theory of right conduct. It was the only method by which he could act his part. When he thought of himself, he was unhappy and not at all companionable. It was only when he was alone that he allowed himself this more than doubtful luxury. When he was with the others, he tried and often succeeded in quite ignoring himself. It seems a little thing,

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but in truth it is the secret of very large issues. Robert's natural powers were limited, but such as they were, they were all set free. Not one of the party, not even Stephen with all his rare common sense, observed so keenly as Robert. No detail seemed to escape him. More than any one else, Robert seemed to be a part of each event, not merely its spectator. In his relations with the others, Robert stood apparently aloof, quite removed from anything like familiarity, and yet curiously enough he achieved an intimacy with each that made each one turn to him instinctively. He became the gentle pivot upon which the party swung. All general remarks seemed, as at the York dinner-party, to be addressed to him. Each expected him to sympathize with them in all their pet enthusiasms and all their pet aversions. No one voiced the feeling, but to each, in rather a different way, it seemed as if Robert were a light, a flame, something more alive than the ordinary run of men. Robert himself had turned his back upon all introspection, in the company of others. When he thought about himself, he was unhappy and dull, and so he had stopped thinking. It was a simple remedy.

But however tragic our mood, however close we hug some pet misery, we all have a saving instinct for happiness. Robert did not analyze the reason, did not even state the fact to himself, but his nature was essentially sound, and this instinct for happiness had been outraged, but not impaired. It led him quite unconsciously to shun being alone, and to seek the company of the others. He remained with Stephen and Donald in their room later than had been his wont. He joined them earlier in the morning. He talked to Mrs. Costello and Alicia whenever they appeared in the

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public drawing-room. He even cultivated a taste for afternoon tea.

The stay at Oxford had been limited to a week. From there our three young friends were to catch very brief glimpses of Cambridge and London, and then betake themselves all unwillingly to Dover, there to separate, Stephen returning to Boston and the law, Donald going on to Berlin and his studies in German literature, Robert journeying to Paris and Italy for such adventures as might befall. The ladies remained at Oxford, but half expected to see Robert some time before he left Italy. It had been a pleasant encounter, and the parting was full of cheer and good wishes.

After the men had gone, the ladies were almost surprised to find how much they missed them. It was Mrs. Costello who voiced the feeling, after they had retired to their own drawing-room in the evening. "It's quite surprising, Alicia, how much I miss those young men. I had rather a feeling, you know, that they were going to be an intrusion. In the Minster, they seemed to me rather crude and unattractive. But they were very nice when one got to know them, and really I liked them better every day. How do you feel about them, — do you, too, miss them?"

"I never miss any one when I have you, Carissima," Alicia answered fondly.

"I think," continued Mrs. Costello, in her high, clear voice, "that your friend, Mr. Pendexter, is quite a remarkable person, quite remarkable. I cannot quite analyze his charm, but he certainly has charm, don't you think so? He has no accomplishments, as far as I could find out.

He does n't sketch, he does n't play, he does n't sing, he does n't speak one foreign language, — in fact, he does n't always speak faultless English. According to his own account of himself, he has had no advantages as they are commonly rated, and yet, do you know, Alicia, I cannot recall any man, not even the Chevalier, whose whole bearing gives the impression of such distinction and such perfect breeding. It is really wonderful the way he carried himself, the way he met every situation without sacrificing his own integrity. The Pendexters are a very good old family, but that would not account for this young man. I think his mother must have been a gentlewoman of more than ordinary quality. He seems to me a very old soul, just waking up. Does he seem so to you ? ”

“ I hardly know,” Alicia answered. “ As a man, he seemed to me very young, the youngest of the three, at least in experience, but I am rather puzzled about his spiritual make-up.”

“ Well, at any rate, he is *simpatica*,” said Mrs. Costello ; “ that would account for his charm in the absence of any tangible accomplishments. In Italy, I am sure they will call him *simpatica*. But, Alicia dear, why did you never present him to me on the steamer, and the other young men ? ”

“ To tell you the truth, dear Wise One, I did n't think they were quite worth while ! I played shuffle-board with them, you know, because I simply had to have the exercise, and they needed a fourth ; but I managed to see very little of them aside from that. Sometimes Mr. Pendexter tried to talk to me. But he was really too naïve. His attitude towards the world seemed to be one of constant sur-

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prise and wonder. We didn't wonder about the same things, so we couldn't hit it off very well."

Mrs. Costello laughed, "Alicia dear, sometimes I think you are very exacting. All science begins in wonder. You ought to have taken the poor boy in hand, and made a Faraday out of him. That is what the Master would have done. But Mr. Pendexter doesn't at all agree with your uncomplimentary picture of him."

"No," said Alicia, "I was quite wrong about him. Or rather, I believe that something has happened to him. He was entirely different at York from on the steamer. And still different again here at Oxford. You must have noticed that! I have a theory about him. Would you like to know what my theory is?"

"Certainly, my dear."

"To hear us, one might fancy that we were two old gossips, shredding our neighbors into very small bits!"

"No, not if one were discriminating," said Mrs. Costello, quietly. "It is not gossip to talk about the essential qualities of people. It's only gossip when one discusses the petty, unimportant things."

Alicia laughed merrily. "That is a comforting distinction, at any rate, you dear Wise One. Well, my theory is that something happened to Mr. Pendexter after he left the steamer, and that whatever it was, the impression deepened still further after he left York. I don't know what it was, but it was something that stirred him to the very depths. Then, here at Oxford, something very unusual happened. I think I know what this was, though you may not agree with my theory."

Alicia paused rather absent-mindedly and sat looking

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into the fire. Mrs. Costello waited for a time and then interrupted her young friend by remarking, "I can hardly tell, my dear, whether I agree with you or not, until I hear what your theory is!"

"Of course you can't, Carissima," Alicia said, arousing herself. "Do forgive my stupidity. I quite forgot that I was not thinking aloud. My theory is that Mr. Pendexter met some deep sorrow, the death of a friend or something of that sort, and in trying to grapple with it had the great good fortune to hit upon the superconscious. I think that quite without knowing it he entered at times into the third stage of consciousness, and lost all sense of his own personality. You remember that when we liked him best, he seemed utterly impersonal, quite unconscious of himself and of all other persons. Apparently he knew only what was happening, just the event itself, and in the curious completeness of his knowledge, he gave some hint of the cosmic consciousness. I know this is a bold theory to apply to such a person as Mr. Pendexter, but it's the only one that will account for the wonderful change that took place in him, and for his perfect manners. On the steamer Mr. Pendexter had none of the ease of Mr. Morse or of Mr. Fergusson. Here at Oxford, you remember, Mr. Pendexter was more self-possessed than either of them. Sometimes I felt that he went ahead of my own aplomb, and *almost* ranked with you!"

"Alicia, you are a shameless flatterer," protested Mrs. Costello. "But about Mr. Pendexter, I hardly know. He has never been with very evolved people. He told me so himself, and asked many questions about the initiate life, rather naïve questions, you know. Apparently he had never



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come in contact with any subtleties of thought. The super-conscious hardly comes without one's knowing about it, and working for it. Mr. Pendexter has never had a Master. Indeed, I once asked him, for he made a remark that showed so much insight that I thought for the moment that he must have found a Master. But he said not unless I called Emerson a Master."

"That is true," Alicia answered. "And that is the wonderful part about it. Mr. Pendexter is curiously honest and simple. My theory is that this unusual childlike goodness brought him into the superconscious without his knowing it. He would probably be vastly surprised if he could hear our talk. I even doubt whether he would understand the mere terms. He just hit upon the fact for himself."

"Perhaps," responded Mrs. Costello. "The Master would delight in such a man, and could help him so much."

"I really feel that we ought to have done more for Mr. Pendexter," Alicia said. "I hope that we shall see him in Italy, and have another chance."

As Mrs. Costello made no answer, Alicia looked at her attentively. Mrs. Costello had closed her eyes, and her face had all the mystery of a mask. It was serene and beautiful, but quite motionless. Alicia understood this mood, and waited quietly for her friend to come back from her trance-like meditation. It was at least ten minutes before Mrs. Costello opened her eyes. Her face had a look of immortal youth about it, and when she smiled it seemed to reflect some inner light. But she seemed not to be aware that any time had passed.

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"We shall see Mr. Pendexter again, I am very sure," she said, quite as if there had been no break in the talk. "I will ask him to come to us in Boston, and perhaps spend some months."

"Carissima, you are a dear!" cried Alicia, enthusiastically. "Nothing could happen to him better than that! It will almost make up for his not having a college education. He seems to regret so keenly that he never went to college. I asked him one day whether he would not like to study here at Oxford —"

"That would never do," objected Mrs. Costello. "He would be quite out of place here."

"Yes. That's just what he said. He said that he would rather not study at all than study here. But you could never guess his reason."

"Then tell me," said Mrs. Costello, smiling.

"He said that Oxford is snobbish, [that he would n't come here himself or let any friend come here, for of the two, it seemed to him that snobbishness is worse than ignorance."

"He is quite right," Mrs. Costello answered. "It's much worse than ignorance. But it was clever of him in such a short time to detect the poison in our beautiful Oxford. Did you put him up to it?"

"I?" questioned Alicia. "No, I'd hardly recognized it myself. At first, I tried to defend Oxford. But my arguments were not at all convincing. In fact, they failed to convince even me when once the possibility had been admitted. Mr. Pendexter said it was like malaria and got into the blood. He thought that one could n't stop here and breathe this atmosphere without being infected."

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"If that's the case, we shall both have to be taking some social quinine."

"I am beginning to realize myself," continued Alicia, "that, splendid as it is here, one works against a certain alien pressure. I have to take hold of myself every little while and brush certain cobwebs out of my spirit!"

"Which means, I suppose," said Mrs. Costello, "that when the work at the library is done, you would like to be whisked over to the Continent, and draw a long breath once more."

"It means just that, astute Carissima; and now shall we read a bit and get ready for bed? It's your turn to read to-night."

Alicia brought the book, and Mrs. Costello read in a melodious, high-pitched voice that seemed to come from neither woman, but from the air above.

It made the words of their chosen philosopher sound like the voice of an oracle.

## CHAPTER XI

### NEW ENVIRONMENTS

It was a gray, drizzly afternoon, and Saturday. In addition, it was cold, and the whole of southeast England seemed as cheerless and dispiriting as could well be imagined. The third-class carriages on the early afternoon train from Canterbury to Dover were not heated. In one of them, our three young friends sat somewhat forlornly, trying to take an intelligent interest in such glimpses of scenery as the gray mistiness allowed, and to keep up some semblance of friendly talk. But in neither effort did they meet with any marked success. Their little attempts at pleasantry sounded like jokes at a funeral. Back of everything else, one important fact protruded itself,—Stephen was taking the *Vaderland* at Dover that very evening, and the triple alliance, as he himself had named it, was about coming to an end.

Donald was gloomy and silent. Stephen was gloomy and mildly philosophic. Robert was gloomy and rebellious.

When the train reached Dover, the drizzle had thickened to a steady rain, the streets were a succession of puddles, and the dismal station was more dismal than ever. The young men hunted up their trunks and consigned them to their respective destinations. It had grown quite dark. The sputtering street lamps added to the prevailing gloom by making it a trifle more visible. The three

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men squeezed into an asthmatic cab and drove off through the dark ugliness to the Hotel Alexandra. The discomfort and depression of the party had now reached such a pitch that the American sense of humor, never far submerged, came to the rescue and brought them to the little hotel in somewhat improved spirits.

But every arrangement jarred. Would the gentlemen have rooms? — yes, but only two of them. Would the gentlemen have dinner at seven? — yes, but only two of them. And so it went through all the small range of domestic affairs, that in spite of the rain outside could have been so jolly had they only been for three, but that were so dismal when one was abstracted.

Robert's room was in the front of the house, and had a bright fire burning on the hearth. As the windows commanded a view of the long pier and the approaching waterway, the friends sat there together, without other light than the fire, and watched for the incoming of the steamer. Under ordinary circumstances they would have had so much to say that the room would have rung with talk and laughter. But now, so near to this unwelcome separation, nothing seemed of sufficient importance to be a suitable topic of conversation. Between Stephen and Donald there had long been a very deep friendship. Between Stephen and Robert, as we have seen, there had sprung up a genuine affection that promised to be lasting. Robert's timidity had long since vanished. He was silent now, not from any embarrassment, but rather from a feeling that the situation expressed itself better without any words. He realized that Europe would be manifestly difficult with Stephen gone, and a trifle more difficult still on

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Monday when he and Donald parted at Calais, Donald bound for Berlin and he for Paris.

Robert put out his hand in the darkness and laid hold of Stephen's. The answering pressure said more to both men than any amount of talk could have done. It told each man that in the other he had a veritable friend. Then a curious thing happened. Robert had been conscious of a moisture about his eyes, and a decidedly unpleasant lump in his throat. But now he was aware of a genuine lightness of spirits. It was as if he had said good-by, — the disagreeable part was all over, and he was now free to enjoy his friend's company as an extra favor granted by fate. He was glad to have it so, and to find himself able to talk naturally and pleasantly, for the situation had been growing irksome. Instead of enjoying these last few moments together, all three men had been wishing that the steamer would only come and go, and the dreaded moment be over.

"When you get home, Stephen lad," said Robert, "you will probably have next to nothing to do. Your few stray clients will have found other more stay-at-home attorneys, the old man will have got used to getting on without you, and altogether you will feel yourself a superfluous member of the community. Ten to one you will wish yourself back here with Donald and me —"

"I do already," answered Stephen, heartily. "But I don't see what's to be done about it."

"That's because you interrupted me. I was about to propose that when these sad circumstances come about, and time hangs heavy on your hands, you stir yourself and do a score or more errands for me."

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"Sure," said Stephen, in his old cheery tone; "I'll do threescore and ten, if need be. What are they? Fire ahead."

"Well, in the first place, you might go out to Bolton some Sunday afternoon, and look up my three cousins."

"Are they all pretty?" asked Stephen.

"Yes; they are all rather pretty, I should say. But that has nothing to do with it. You are to go wholly as my messenger, and not for your own pleasure."

"I like that," said Stephen; "and wear green glass goggles so as to keep my mind strictly to the errand?"

"Yes, if it's so difficult for you to concentrate your mind as all that."

"And what am I to say?"

"That depends upon who comes to the door. If the oldest one comes, — that's Martha, — you will bow and say, 'How do you do, Miss Pendexter. I am Stephen Morse, and have come to bring you a message from your cousin, Robert Pendexter.' If the second one comes, you will say, 'How do you do, Miss Mattie, —'"

"And not bow?" put in Stephen.

"Also bow. And if the youngest one comes to the door, you will bow your very prettiest and say, 'How do you do, Miss Priscilla. I am Stephen Morse,' etc."

"But how in thunder shall I know which is which?"

"Very easily, if you use your wits. Priscilla is the prettiest, Martha the most intellectual, and Mattie the jolliest."

"As a lawyer," protested Stephen, "I submit that if they don't line up and give some evidence of their beauty, intellect, and humor for my judicial wit to act upon, I

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don't see how I am to carry out your instructions. They are not practical, sir. And like as not the maid will come to the door anyway."

"Not if you go on Sunday afternoon. The maid will be out, and they only keep one."

"Well, granted that I overcome the difficulties," said Stephen, "what message am I to carry to these three beautiful sisters?"

"You are to tell them all about our trip, for they've never been to Europe, and it will entertain them immensely. And if you can't do it in one afternoon, you will have to go twice. But that won't matter, since you will have so much time on your hands."

"Lord, no," said Stephen. "And what's the next errand?"

"The next is for a week-day afternoon, just to while away the tedium while you are waiting for clients. You might go around and call on Messrs. Watson and Reed, the famous coffee and spice merchants in Doane Street."

"And talk about the weather?" put in Stephen.

"No; something more worth while. You can talk about me."

"And tell them how happy you are not to be in their very agreeable company any longer?"

"Precisely," said Robert; "only put it more diplomatically. Tell them that with my present advantage of over three months' perspective, the coffee and spice enterprise seems to me a hopelessly dull affair, and that I should advise them to save their own souls — if they are not already lost — by pulling out of the business and leaving it to the junior clerks. You might offer to make out



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the necessary legal papers to settle the transfer, and then they would be sure of your own disinterestedness."

"Oh, little Pen, you're a great one. Shall I give your love to the lady typist, and tell her that when you get home you mean to come and marry her?"

"Not by a great deal. When you see her, you will understand why. The lady typist they had when I was there looked as if she fed on ten-penny nails. But you might give my love to the office boy, Dennis Sullivan. He was the only decent fellow in the bunch. Tell him I mean to look him up just as soon as I get home, and that I'm downright ashamed of myself never to have written to him."

"I thought you had," said Donald; "I remember seeing his name on some of the mail we sent off."

"Nothing but picture postals," answered Robert, "and only occasionally at that."

"I'll think the matter over, little Pen, and try to be both diplomatic *and* truthful. But not now; for if I can see straight through my tears, there, my hearties, is the *Vaderland* sticking her nose into Dover waterway and making directly for the pier. I'd better be off."

Donald and Robert strained their eyes to penetrate the mist, and made out the lights of a big steamer that promised to be the *Vaderland*.

"Now don't come to the pier with me," begged Stephen. "It's a nasty night, and I'd much rather think of you both as safe and sound in this cheery room, waiting for the inevitable roast joint that passes over here for dinner."

"Not on your life," said Donald, grimly. "We're

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going to the pier, and what's more, we are going to board the steamer to see what sort of a state-room you have; and what's more, we are then going to stand shivering on the pier, mingling our tears with the salt spray and the fresh raindrops, until the gang-plank is pulled in, and you are off to the land of the free and the home of the brave, — are n't we, Pen?"

"We are, all of that, and whatever else the occasion demands."

"And then, when you are really off," continued Donald, "we are going to feel as lost as the babes in the wood, and be wholly miserable."

Outside, the rain was falling with melancholy persistence. The three friends, bundled up in long raincoats, and managing their umbrellas as best they could, made their way along the glistening quay, and out the long, gusty pier to the landing-stage. The steamer came crawling up through the mist, and was finally fastened alongside of the pier. All three men went on board, but for two of them it had to be a hasty visit. As soon as Robert and Donald had assured themselves that Stephen was well provided for in the way of a state-room, they had to scurry down the gang-plank and join the little crowd of persons on the pier who, under most adverse circumstances, were trying to pretend that the process of saying good-by is a cheerful operation. There were a few ghastly triumphs, but on the whole they were more disheartening than the open failures. Stephen hung over the rail, the excitement of putting off having restored his usual buoyant spirits. From time to time he shouted some parting advice, and had fairly successful retorts from Robert, less

frequently from Donald. The big steamer got under motion, and soon Stephen's friendly figure was lost in the gloom. The last they heard was a faint "Au revoir, my hearties! Don't be Mr. Smiths! And remember — " But the last words were lost in the splash of the waters, and they could only guess what it was that they were to remember.

Sunday at Dover, or indeed in any little English town, is not a very exhilarating occasion. The sun came out, it is true, and dried up the puddles. Masses of magnificent white clouds rolled up from the Channel and outlined themselves against the deep blue of the sky. But the sun brought out no friendliness in the little seaport. On all sides, there were too obvious evidences of decay. Over it all there rested an atmosphere of smug respectability that seemed to rob the very sunshine of any joy. Donald declared that he wanted to swear, but happily omitted to carry out his wish. Robert was curious to discover the source of this depressing influence. It recalled his memorable Sunday morning at York, and the gloom that struck in upon his soul as they walked toward the Minster. But here there was no redeeming Minster, no inspiring music. The sea and sky failed to take their place. In the absence of ecclesiastical architecture and church music, the two friends amused themselves by counting up the number of houses for sale or to rent. Although the numbers grew rapidly, as a resource it soon failed to amuse, and they were glad to return to their comfortable little hotel. There were only two other guests, but the lady proprietress had considerable skill in talk, and the two young men were forced to admit that, thanks to her, — and the cook, —

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the dinner was a success. Robert mentioned the number of vacant houses they had seen, and asked the meaning of it. The lady proprietress confessed that the town was not prospering, and added feelingly that having so many vacant houses made the rates very high.

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed Robert, "that your vacant houses pay no taxes?"

"Practically none," the lady proprietress answered, "unless they are furnished, and luggage vans are common enough, are n't they?"

Even Donald, poet and idealist, pricked up his ears, and volunteered somewhat explosively: "We would n't stand for that, you know, in America. All real estate pays taxes, whether it's occupied or not. It's the only fair way!"

The Indian colonel sitting opposite Donald opened his mouth to speak, but thought better of it and devoted himself wholly to his dinner.

The Channel is not so bad as it is painted, and especially when the sun shines and the wind is mannerly. Robert and Donald found little to admire in the arrangements of the boat, but exulted in the good air and sunshine. They reached Calais in a surprisingly short time. Both had looked forward to the traditional ordeal, but experienced instead a genuine pleasure. Calais, from the roadstead, is not very impressive. Donald gazed at it rather contemptuously, and blurted out: "To think that Queen Mary should have had Calais written on her heart when she might have had so many prettier things!"

"Oh, well," said Robert, comfortingly, "Queen Mary was never thought to have very good taste,—in Boston!"

Donald got them through the custom-house easily, and

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saw Robert safely settled in the through express for Paris. There was, fortunately, little time for leave-taking. Robert was soon speeding southward; and somewhat later Donald was moving in more leisurely fashion towards Berlin. The triple alliance had been dissolved.

Robert had expected to feel completely lost when he found himself on this journey, and for the first time alone in Europe. But quite to his surprise, he decidedly liked the sensation. He liked the feel of paddling his own canoe. This new Europe, with its unknown tongue and different architecture, was much more the Europe of his boyish imagination. There were plenty of Americans in the carriage,—there always are in everything headed for Paris,—and sometimes their voices sounded unnecessarily harsh. But Robert's seat was next to the window, and he found too much of interest outside to pay any attention to his fellow passengers. Robert did not know French. He watched all the signs, however, and being rather quick at putting two and two together, he contrived to get the meaning out of many of them. He had, moreover, a remarkable little conversation book from which he extracted many sentences, a few of which were useful. His Paris Baedeker was in English. He had originally wanted to buy it in French, quite assured that his very necessities would force him to learn the language so much the sooner. But Stephen had laid restraining hand upon this heroic impulse. He had counseled the purchase of the book in English, and with so much insistence that it might almost be called compulsion. Robert was frequently grateful for the violence.

At the present moment, speeding towards Paris, Robert

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was in high spirits. He was almost ashamed of it. He kept telling himself how much he missed his friends, and it was all very genuine, but nevertheless he was unaccountably glad to be alone. He also reproached himself for the childish pleasure he took in the comfort of the first-class carriage. He had been quite willing to travel third-class in England, but now that it was no longer necessary, he enjoyed the luxury of the first-class with a zest that his New England conscience could not wholly approve of.

When the train pulled into the great Gare du Nord, Robert clutched his suit-case and umbrella with a firm grip — he had heard that Paris was a very wicked place, and full of pitfalls for the young and unwary — and made his way out to a cab-stand. In spite of their uniforms and brass numbers, Robert would not allow the porters to put hand to his luggage, or even so much as to call a cab for him. He deemed it safer to do all this for himself. After what seemed to him very praiseworthy circumspection, and the proper noting of its official number, Robert finally intrusted himself to a safe-looking vehicle. He had had enough of hotels. In America they had always appeared to him as delectable places. But two months among English hotels is enough to disillusionize almost any one. Robert had decided to try a *pension*, and in order to be quite sure that it was respectable and proper, he chose the first one mentioned in Baedeker, the Pension Carpenter, on the Avenue de Friedland. He knew precisely where it was on the map of the city, and had even traced out the probable route from the Gare du Nord. Robert almost hung out of the window of the cab in his keen interest in all the activities of this bustling foreign city. It was

already growing dark, but he was genuinely sorry when the route came to an end, and he found himself at the door of his chosen *pension*.

There was some question about a room, and whether he had written ahead, and whether he had been recommended to them. In the midst of it all, a brisk-looking, middle-aged Englishwoman appeared, looked Robert over in one quick glance, and said that he could have the corner chamber on the fourth *étage*. The tall clerk still seemed skeptical about Robert's qualifications, as he had not written ahead, and asked, apparently more to satisfy his own doubts than from any concern for Robert's possessions, if Monsieur also had a trunk. Robert was much chagrined to find that in this, his first little journey alone, he had been so little competent that he had wholly forgotten his trunk, and had left it at the Gare du Nord. The clerk said it would be all right, however, as the *portier* could get it. Instead of being annoyed, the *portier* grinned, and looked rather pleased at the commission thus thrust upon him. Robert thought that he must be a very good-natured man.

Then a maid was called and told to take Robert to his room. She put him in a dim automatic lift, shut the door, and started him towards the roof. The tiny cage moved at snail's pace, but even this over-temperance in the matter of speed failed to produce the illusion of safety. Robert was relieved to have the contrivance finally come to rest, and to find himself on the level with a corridor. It is needless to say that the maid got there first. She had the suit-case and umbrella in her hand, and the same imperturbable smile on her face. She did not even seem out of

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breath. She led Robert along a gloomy corridor, around huge hampers, boxes, and trunks, and finally landed him by devious ways in front of the corner chamber to which he had been assigned. Robert himself could see no door, but the maid found a door-knob. In a flash, a narrow opening appeared in the evenly papered wall, and Robert stepped into his own room.

It was not a grand apartment, the one that Robert found himself in, but scrupulously clean, and much in taste. The long French windows opened on a narrow balcony. Robert threw aside his overcoat, and stepped out. He found himself among the treetops of the Avenue de Friedland, in the regions of the upper mansards. Near at hand, in vague, mystic beauty, the Arc de Triomphe rose clear and majestic against the western sky.

And this was Paris!

It was what Robert had imagined it would be. He drew a deep breath of satisfaction. Then he turned back into his room. He knew that he should like Paris, and that he should be very happy there. The maid had touched a match to the fire, turned on the light, unstrapped his suit-case, all in a flash, and had disappeared through the hole in the wall that served as a door. Robert felt a sense of peace and comfort greater than he had known for several weeks. He felt a curious affinity for Paris, and much of the thrill that had characterized his early days on the steamer.

Once more, Robert stepped out on the balcony. The night had deepened, but in the west, the gold and old rose filled the sky with a parting glory. The Arc de Triomphe was only a vague outline, but in some subtle way it spoke to Robert of aspiration and achievement.



He was glad to live so very near it, in its very shadow, as it were, and he felt his own spirit soar into rarer regions. As he reviewed his life in England, with its storm and stress, its touches of happiness, its suggested illuminations, he felt that he must not regret anything that had happened there, since it had been a time of awakening. But now that he was beginning to be awake, it was no longer the place for him. It was here on the Continent, in this freer atmosphere of ideas, that he would find knowledge and growth. He recalled what Sappho had once said to him, that the Continent was the place to get ideas, and England at best only a place to use them. Robert knew too little either of the Continent or of England to divine a cause. As yet it was only an intuition, but had it been a proposition in Euclid, he could not have felt more deeply assured of its truth. Something told him that this was his chance, and that in the broader life of the Continent, he would find what he sought.

In this retrospect and prospect, Robert had thought of Pauline in the same objective way that he had thought of Sappho and Miss Frothingham, but he had not at all dwelt upon the fact that he was to see her again in Paris. She had no part in the wonderful dreams that made the Continent seem so alluring. It was quite dark when Robert turned back into his room, closed the long French window, and rather mechanically dressed for dinner. When this was accomplished, he retraced his steps along the much encumbered corridor. He avoided the lift, preferring to walk down the many flights of marble steps that separated him from the *salle à manger*. This was a curious room, terminating in an awkward, rounded triangle. The tables

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were too close together, and there were too many people, for the size of the apartment. The people were more plainly dressed than they had been in England. None of the other men wore evening clothes, and the women had manifestly freshened up their afternoon costumes instead of discarding them for something more elaborate. In spite of this outer inferiority, however, Robert was struck by the fact that the total effect was very attractive and human, far better than he had been seeing for some time. In England, the wooden servants with their monotonous "Thank you" had got on his nerves, and the prevailing gloom of the many dining-rooms had fairly taken away his appetite. But here, in this odd-shaped, overcrowded dining-room, the scene had an air of natural and proper gayety about it that made every stranger in it seem friendly. The waiters were more alert and human. They even ventured to put some expression into their faces when they spoke to the guests. And the guests themselves were talking, not about hot water and baths and food and colonial appointments, but about matters that, to judge from the vivacity of the talk and the warmth of the interest, were clearly in themselves worth while.

It was quickly assumed that Robert did not speak French, and he was consequently placed at a small table where both English and American were doing lively service. As he sat down, every one at the table looked up and said "Good-evening." He was glad to see the brisk-looking Englishwoman, who had approved of his visible credentials when he first arrived, sitting at the end of the table. She evidently had something to do with the running of the *pension*. It seemed quite natural that she should know his

own name. She introduced him to the four other people at the table, not in a solemn way that made it seem a final and talk-discouraging ceremony, but in a sprightly fashion, which suggested that introductions were at most mere preliminaries, and only worth while as they led to something better. It was the only table at which English was being spoken. At the other tables, apparently every known tongue of Europe was in use.

The brisk-looking Englishwoman asked Robert where he had come from, and when he said directly from England, questioned him as to how he liked it.

"Not at all," Robert answered, with entire frankness. "Not nearly so much as Paris."

"Oh, then you know Paris?" she suggested.

"Hardly. I've only been here two or three hours."

"Then it must be that you dislike England," said the lady, smiling at Robert's positiveness.

"I'm afraid I do," he answered. "I'm almost ashamed to say it. I think you're English yourself, are n't you?"

"Yes, I am; but you need n't apologize. I've lived thirty years in Paris, and I know just what you mean. I don't like England, either. But tell me how you happen to dislike it so."

"Because it's so snobbish," said Robert, promptly. "And because the people are so dull, and talk about such stupid things, and have so few ideas. I don't like the spirit there."

"That is just what I dislike," assented the lady, — "the spirit. But you know there are many English people who feel precisely as we do about these things. They are not all snobbish and dull."

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"Oh, I know that," Robert hastened to answer. "I've heard that the farther you get away from England, the nicer the English people are."

They all laughed, and an American lady added, "Which comes pretty near to saying that when they cease being English, they are really quite tolerable."

"Not so bad as that," said Robert. "I mean that when you mix a little human, democratic yeast with English virtues, the result is tremendously fine. If, for example, you give them thirty years of Paris," and he turned politely to the hostess.

"You are almost a Frenchman, with your ready flattery," Miss Carpenter answered. "But it's not time or geographical distance. The English in India are worse than the English at home. The thing that counts is the extent to which they emancipate themselves from the ideals of the so-called upper classes, with their sickening worship of social position, and their too great disregard of human qualities. This emancipation does come to us, but it comes only in spots. Strip an Englishman of his insularity, and he is a pretty fine specimen of the human race. If you Americans, Mr. Pendexter, would only take our House of Lords bodily over to Chicago, and give each member a rich American wife and a hunting-lodge in the Rocky Mountains, England would not be such a bad place for the rest of us."

"We are certainly doing our best to supply them with wives," said Robert. "Perhaps the next generation will be more lively and democratic."

"I doubt it," responded Miss Carpenter. "I am sorry to say that the Americans who come to England do nothing

to redeem us. They only confirm us in our sins. Whether they marry and settle, or whether they merely settle, or whether they simply skim the outskirts of upper-class society, they outdo the English in the very faults we are complaining of. The women are brighter than ours, and while they are young and pretty, their vivacity carries the day, at least among the men; but every woman has at last to make terms with her own sex, and some gray day when she is no longer petted and courted, she folds the wings that now can only get her into trouble, and grows to be as conservative and commonplace and snobbish as any old dowager among ourselves. I wish earnestly that the Americans would act as a leaven. Of course some few of them do. But the majority of them, both men and women, do us no good. They get to be even worse than we are!"

"At any rate, they dress better," suggested the American lady.

"A small virtue," said Miss Carpenter, "when it is a question of the human spirit, when human souls are the issue. It's like Nero's fiddling while Rome burns!"

Robert listened attentively to this arraignment of his countrymen. He could hardly say whether it was true or not. The women he knew in America did not belong to the fashionable set who either marry into the English nobility, or essay the difficult feat of storming English society. The cousins at Bolton belonged to what is known in New England as "solid stock," and the few other women he knew either belonged to the same class, or, if they hailed from Pinckney Street, to one a step lower down. Here in Europe he knew only three American women, — Pauline, Sappho, and Miss Frothingham, — and they were certainly

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not place-hunters, with designs upon either English pedigree or English society. As Robert thought about them, he realized that none of them were typical. Of course they had traits common to all well-bred Americans, but by no ultra-Americanism could they be put forward as representative. In spite of his limited social experience, Robert felt sure that they were all unusual women, and each in her own way rare and wonderful. As he recalled some of the stories he had read in the newspapers about society and its doings in New York, in Lenox, and in Newport, he half suspected that his hostess was right. "It may be," he said finally, "that we do not see the best of your nation, just as you do not, as a rule, see the best of ours."

"Thank you!" exclaimed the American lady; "I've been with Miss Carpenter for four months."

Robert looked at her in some surprise. The retort struck him as ill-bred in making such quick personal application of a general remark. He was too honest to do what she evidently expected him to do, put in an elaborate disclaimer, or even take refuge in the trite saying that present company is always excepted. It was the hostess who reminded her pleasantly that Mr. Pendexter had said "as a rule," and must therefore be held guiltless. Undoubtedly it was perverse in the American lady, but she liked Robert the better for what she was pleased to consider his rudeness.

Robert continued rather gravely, "I do not know America very well, not even Boston, but in the summer, when I take my vacation, I do meet people from all over the country. I've known the boarders in a small farmhouse in

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Vermont to come from half a dozen different states, southern and western, as well as our eastern and middle states. And the people are as different as if they'd come from different countries. They use different words and pronounce them differently. They have such unlike ideas about government and religion, and the things that are worth while. As you know," he added, turning to the American lady, "they even dress differently."

"I should hope so," she retorted quickly; "I should hate to dress like the New Englanders do."

Robert ignored the thrust so completely that the lady doubted whether he had perceived it. He went on imperturbably: "I have been tempted to think, since I've been in Europe, that we haven't such a thing as a typical American, not even a typical New Englander or Southerner or Westerner. They may look alike, and talk alike, and seem alike, but when you really get to know them, each is more of an individual than a type. I even doubt whether it is accurate to speak of a typical millionaire, or a typical manufacturer, or even of a typical politician. They've a lot in common on the surface, but it's the hidden qualities that count. If I, a born Massachusetts man, can't decide upon a typical American, I don't wonder that foreigners get all mixed up about us, and are quite at the mercy of the particular men and women they've happened to meet. Perhaps it's the same in England, and that after all we have no right to judge."

"That's a charitable suggestion, isn't it?" said the hostess. "But I hardly think it applies to England quite as fitly as it does to America. We're a fairly homogeneous people, you know, but your nation is made up of all the

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races under the sun. It *is* possible, I think, to run down a typical Englishman, and I quite agree that he is singularly insular and irritating. But there's another and a broader type appearing. We are coming to have an Englishman who is bent on doing great things personally, in art and literature and scholarship, and not so bent on governing all the rest of the world. He's bound to increase, you know, and some day I'm hoping that he will be the typical Englishman,—a modern Elizabethan, who will gain some of the love of the world, as well as such a big slice of its commerce."

"He'd better go in for the love," spoke up an American gentleman, rather brusquely, "for he's losing some of the commerce. England is sinking back into the position of a second-class power. But quite seriously, I think her chances of real success are deepening. It's not good for an Englishman to be cock of the walk all the time. If you let him have his way all the time, he's a good deal of a brute. But make him give in a bit, and he can be a very decent fellow. That's the reason it's so good for him to have an American wife."

"William!" said the second American lady protestingly.

Robert had not caught her name, but now he felt sure that she must be the speaker's wife. It occurred to him that this trick of suddenly intruding a personal note into serious discussion was really very annoying, and he wondered whether it could be distinctively American. At any rate, it flattened out the conversation with quite amazing speed. He glanced over at the hostess. She evidently agreed with him. She had called a servant and was giving some instructions that seemed not to be absolutely necessary.



## CHAPTER XII

### PAULINE

ROBERT liked the sensation of being in Paris. He could hardly have told why he did, but when he awoke the next morning and looked around his small apartment, he breathed a sigh of deep contentment. It was still early when he had a fire lighted in the grate, and his morning coffee brought to him. He dressed quickly, and spent some moments on the balcony, taking his first daylight view of his surroundings. Then he returned to his room, bent on making it comfortable for the month that he meant to stay *pensionnaire*.

It was characteristic of Robert's orderly, old-fashioned ways that he should first of all unpack his trunk down to the very last articles, and have its much belabeled bulk added to the motley assemblage in the corridor. The contents of the trunk told in concrete fashion some of the changes that had been taking place in Robert's life since September. It was merely a small steamer trunk, but it came from Boston scarcely more than half filled. Now it was uncomfortably full, and would manifestly soon need a companion. Not only had the contents changed in quantity, but they had suffered a still more astonishing change in quality. The evening clothes purchased in Liverpool had been supplemented by still more elaborate shopping in Regent Street. It was Stephen who had suggested that at best a quiet gentleman like Robert could wear but a few clothes in the course of a year, and that they ought,

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for the sake of excellence in general, to be of the soundest quality and make. Not only would they look better while in service, urged the judicial Stephen, but they would also wear longer. Robert had yielded to this dual argument, with results that added materially to his personal appearance. This morning he meant to carry the process still farther. He went through all his possessions, separating the sheep from the goats. The sheep he put away carefully in clothespress and bureau drawers. The goats he piled in a neat heap on the floor. It was an interesting heap, and I am not sure that his Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have approved of it. Certainly the Robert Pendexter of Pinckney and Doane Streets would have regarded it as an unholy extravagance. The gray sack suit, bought on Washington Street, and with many months of service to its credit, formed the basis of the pile. Then came a miscellaneous collection of frayed linen, discarded underwear, collars and cuffs with circuitous edges, a pair of shoes that in earlier days would have suffered another half-soling, and on top of all a rainbow collection of neckties, the flotsam and jetsam of many years of service, but now thrown over by reason of too visible shabbiness, or too poor quality, or, most extravagant of all, because their colors, once thought highly suitable, were no longer regarded by a more fastidious taste as being quite becoming.

In making up this remarkable collection of clothing, Robert had more than once hesitated and been on the point of rescuing some garment or necktie, but he put the temptation aside, and went grimly on. He even passed the sheep in final survey, and abstracted one or two articles from their ranks. When the elimination was at last com-

pleted, it became very evident that a second trunk would not be needed for some weeks to come. The next question was how to get rid of the goats. Robert rang the bell once more. The same maid, with the same imperturbable smile, appeared. Robert could find no fitting phrase in his little conversation book for the present occasion, so he merely pointed to the pile, and indicated that the things were to be removed from the room. The maid looked a little appalled at the size and heterogeneity of the collection, but soon bundled them all out into the over-occupied corridor. In a moment she returned with a lead pencil and a laundry-list. Robert shook his head, brought out his pocket dictionary, and managed to say, "Pour — les — pauvres."

The maid gave Robert an appreciative smile, and later in the day, could he have followed the matter to its conclusion, he would have seen her bestowing his former property upon a poor young artisan, whom she meant all in good season to enrich by the gift of her own hand. With each article she also gave a merry laugh and an admirable imitation of Robert's halting speech when he said, "Pour — les — pauvres."

Robert stepped out on the balcony while his small apartment was being put in order. He foresaw that he should often be stepping out on the balcony. It was sunny and warm out there, and though aside from the great Arc de Triomphe the view offered little but treetops, chimneypots, and mansards, the friendly sky was always there, and a dryer, more crystalline air than Robert had recently had the opportunity to drink in. When he went inside, the little chamber was in perfect order. Robert put a few finishing touches to his somewhat hurried toilet. He car-

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ried his clothes well,—the new London suit, the better linen, the more correct tie,—and, of greater importance, he carried himself well, far better than formerly. Priscilla would have promptly assured him that he looked very swell, and Mattie would have added by way of mischief,—“for him.” But they would doubtless have been puzzled by the more subtle changes in his appearance, the easier manners, and the change in his face, a change that spoke of a greatly enlarged experience. It must not be thought that Robert had grown fashionable, or was giving over-much attention to dress. He was not himself aware of the marked improvement in his own appearance. He had merely been passing judgment upon his personal possessions, and now that his attention had been called to such matters as being part of the larger scheme of excellence, his judgment was proving remarkably good.

The material side of things being thus temporarily disposed of,—they decline any more permanent retirement,—Robert drew an armchair up before the fire. Tempting as the Parisian streets looked, he meant to resist them until after luncheon. He was bent for the moment on making plans, and sat note-book, calendar, and lead pencil in hand. It was already November. The Christmas holidays would not be a good time for traveling. Robert marked the second Monday in January as the day for starting for Italy. This would double his proposed stay in Paris, but the longer time would not be too much for all he planned to do. In the first place, he meant to have a French lesson every day. He had heard that the language was easy. In the several weeks at his disposal, he fancied that he could make a sufficient start to go on

afterwards without a master. This plan was wholly of his own making, and was to be a secret until he could speak and read French with some facility. He could easily picture the surprise of the cousins at Bolton when this accomplishment first became known. But it was not for the cheap pleasure of creating this surprise that he was taking up the language. He was not quite sure what his real motive was. In a way, he liked the idea of its convenience. But deeper than that was the instinct that such knowledge would be a help in appreciation, — just how or why, he could not quite have said. Perhaps also he wanted to propose some feat in scholarship to see whether he was still equal to it.

In the next place, and largely in deference to Stephen's insistent urging, Robert meant to take up some form of physical culture. Stephen had been on the track team at Harvard, was even now a member of the cadets, and counted health and strength as part of the moral life. He had put it to Robert as a duty, knowing that no other appeal was so sure of success. In addition, the tailors of both London and Liverpool had pointed out to Robert that one shoulder was considerably lower than the other. In Regent Street, the man had added by way of finality that "it was a shame for a rich young gentleman like him to be at all lop-sided, for them as did n't know might mistake him for a bookkeeper or a clerk." At the risk of a less assured fit, Robert had replied promptly that until recently he had been both. For quite a different reason, however, he hated the idea of being in any way misshapen. From the time he was a very small boy, any deformity had repelled him strongly. He winced both times at the thought of

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having crooked shoulders, but he would hardly have thought of trying seriously to mend matters had Stephen not urged regular physical culture.

In the third place, and this on Donald's advice, Robert meant to try to cultivate a love for the drama. He planned to go to the theatre several times a week, and perhaps — if he could stand it — he might go every night. Even in its milder form, this determination had cost him some effort, and was made more grimly than pleasure is usually mapped out.

Donald had jokingly advised that Robert should also fall in love, it really did n't matter with whom, — anybody from a grisette up. But Robert was not even amused at the proposition.

Both Stephen and Donald themselves would have been vastly amused could they have known how very seriously Robert was planning this campaign of personal culture. The triple alliance had been wholly dissolved as far as actual presence went, but it is doubtful whether the two friends had ever exercised so practical an influence over Robert in Great Britain, when they were all together, as they were doing now in Paris, when he was quite alone. For one thing, they were not there to laugh at him when he did follow their suggestions. We are not likely to admit it, but distance lends enchantment to advice as well as to some other things.

Robert's curriculum was a trifle diverting, — French, gymnastics, and the theatre, — and especially as applied to so unworldly and unathletic a person as Robert, but it was better chosen than he in his ignorance quite knew. It was at least a step in the right direction, since each object

of culture represented a possible enlargement in his own nature.

Robert added a fourth purpose to the list. It was involved, it is true, in the other three, but he meant to cultivate it additionally, as an end in itself. Of all his plans, it was perhaps the one that Robert would have been the shyest about avowing. Like the theatre-going, it was due to Donald. As we have seen, Donald had repeatedly charged Robert with lacking imagination. He even said that Stephen lacked imagination. Indeed, this was Donald's favorite explanation for any attitude of mind or any concrete behaviour that was not immediately comprehensible to the poetic mode of thought. Most of Donald's little preachments were thrown off in a casual, happy-go-lucky fashion that made one wonder just how much influence he had in the schoolroom. At first, Robert gave these preachments scant respect. But with the passing of the weeks he had come to see that however careless or exaggerated Donald's speech might seem, it was never devoid of a certain incontestable truth. Stephen could shred Robert's own meagre philosophy of life into the veriest tatters, but he could gain none but very minor victories over the poet. Robert accepted this oft-repeated judgment upon himself, and quite genuinely acknowledged that he must be deficient in imagination. He was at a loss to know how to remedy such a fundamental defect. He hoped much from the drama, something from the French lessons, and even a little from the gymnastics. But such a grave defect ought not, he reasoned, to be left to accidental and secondary remedies. He determined to make at least an attempt in the way of direct, first-hand culture. Sundays were to be devoted to this end. Robert

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decided that every single Sunday he remained in Paris, he would do something different and unusual. He might even sketch, or perhaps try to write something other than letters. Could Donald have known of these rather matter-of-fact and prosaic plans for catching so wayward a thing as the imagination, he would have declared that Robert had even less imagination than he supposed and was quite hopeless. Stephen, on the contrary, would have slapped Robert on the back, and offered to bet ten to one that Robert would come out ahead.

This orderly arrangement of his possessions and his days occupied Robert so completely that he was surprised to find the morning gone and the luncheon hour at hand. When he went down to the table, he had occasion to approve once more his decision in favor of *pensions* as against hotels. The Americans were out shopping or sight-seeing, and Miss Carpenter and Robert were the only ones at their table. This was precisely what Robert wanted. The friendly acquaintance started the evening before made good progress. Miss Carpenter knew of an excellent French teacher, an old gentlewoman, who not only spoke very pure French herself, but who also had experience and skill in teaching. Robert rather demurred at having a woman teacher.

"I suppose you think a man would do it more thoroughly," said Miss Carpenter; "perhaps bully you into learning more per lesson. But really that is not the case. It might be true in mathematics or science. But in language the women are much the better. Their voices are higher pitched, and one hears more distinctly what they say. And they themselves are quicker of ear, and always



correct pronunciation more quickly than a man does. I have always found that the women get the better results."

Robert laughed and said, "I think you are considerable of a *féministe*, are n't you?"

"No, I am not. I almost wish that I were, for it would comfort me in many ways. I am ready to admit that in big things you men go away ahead of us. In the big achievements, and in the big moralities, you gain heights that we women rarely reach unless you help us up to them. But in little things, in the little achievements, the little moralities, I am sure that we women take the lead. It's something of a comfort to reflect that, after all, life is mostly made up of little things. Teaching a modern language is not a big thing. It is a very little thing, but it takes a big conscience and no end of patience. Madame Sylvestre has both."

"Is she a lady?" asked Robert.

"Entirely. And that is another advantage the women teachers have over the men. It may be different in America, but here, it would be rather a poor sort of man who would take to teaching French to foreigners, some one who had failed in larger work, and taken to this as a last resort. But with women it is quite different. There are fewer things they can do to earn money. The women who give French lessons belong, as a rule, to a much better class than do the men. Shall I give you Madame Sylvestre's address?"

Robert pulled out his note-book, and put down the address as Miss Carpenter dictated it. He said that he would call that afternoon. Miss Carpenter smiled when Robert asked about a teacher of physical culture. She did not

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know of any herself, but was quite sure that her brother would know. She promised to have the address at dinner. Robert also gathered that the play at the Odéon that night was quite worth while. When he left the table, he felt that he had already made a very good start towards setting his programme in motion.

Once on the street, *en route* to the bankers, and the temptation to walk was too strong for Robert to resist. It is an experience, one's first walk in Paris. And this whether it be taken on the Avenue de Friedland and the Boulevard Haussman, or in some totally different quarter. No other city offers quite the same spectacle. It is not always gay, this *comédie humaine*. On the contrary, it passes sometimes quite over to tragedy. But gay or sad, it is always intensely alive. There is nothing sodden and beastly about a French crowd as there so often is about an English or a Scotch crowd. Whatever his personal fortunes may be, you can hardly imagine a genuine Parisian's wishing himself anywhere else than just there in Paris. This gives the crowd a certain fundamental air of contentment. One can almost hear it say, "Where else, — if not Paris. But there is nowhere else. If not Paris, — bah, one will not think of such misfortune. One might as well go at once to Père la Chaise!" Robert had often thought the Boston crowd visibly self-satisfied. But in Paris, the approval goes beyond satisfaction. It is worship.

Robert's own spirits were high. When he reached Morgan's, he knew that it mattered little whether he found letters or not. He was contented and happy just as it was. He went up in the lift, and stared with a curious air of detachment at the crowd of Americans gathered in the

offices above. They quite failed to interest him. He drew a thousand francs on his letter of credit, and was about entering the lift again, when it occurred to him that he had not even asked if there were any letters. He turned back, and made his way to the letter clerk. After some delay, Robert got a couple of letters, but found himself staring at them with very mild curiosity. They seemed much less important than the mere fact that he was in Paris. He did not know either handwriting. One letter was from America, a shabby bluish-white envelope, whose beauty was not heightened by the sprawling, undisciplined handwriting. Robert tore it open and took out a sheet of equally shabby foolscap paper covered with similar hieroglyphics. But his face lighted up with pleasure when he found that this ungainly missive came from his former humble colleague, — his “obedient servant, Dennis Sullivan.” It was an extraordinary letter, for the body of it consisted of but one sentence, telling Robert in one breath, as it were, all the news in Dennis’s little world. Robert was touched by the letter, — it was so full of gratitude for the picture postals and of genuine affection for himself. He put it away in his pocket, and resolved that just as soon as he got back to America, he would do something for the boy.

Occupied with this thought, Robert tore open his second letter almost mechanically. It was addressed in a woman’s hand, and bore the Paris post-mark. It was a strong, clear hand, but the arrangement in the matter of pages was more erratic than Robert was accustomed to. It began on what he would have called the fourth page, passed over to the first, and then, running lengthwise, covered the second and third. It took a moment to find the end and

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read the signature. The letter was from Pauline, and had been written about a week before from the Hôtel Castiglioni. It was friendly and matter-of-fact, just the sort of letter, Robert reflected, that "a natural history girl" might be supposed to write. It stated that Pauline and her father were established for some weeks at the Castiglioni, and would be glad to have Robert call when he reached Paris. The letter stated further that they found the hotel satisfactory, and that Robert might care to stop there also. Then there were some friendly messages from Mr. Marshall, a word about Billy, and that was all. Robert read the letter twice. It left him wholly unmoved. A few weeks earlier, and the suggestion that he might care to be at the same hotel would have filled him with joy, and made any other news seem wholly insignificant. Now, on the contrary, he was glad that he had told Miss Carpenter at luncheon that he would engage his room until January. He also remembered with some satisfaction that she had said distinctly that there was not another room vacant in the whole *pension*, or even likely to be. He had asked particularly, but without any special motive, for not even the long staircases that had to be climbed, if one declined the lift, could take away the charm of the sunny little apartment among the treetops, the chimney-pots, and the mansards. Robert had no reason to think that the Marshalls would care to come to the Pension Carpenter, but he had no doubt about his own desires in the matter. He knew that it would bother him greatly to have them there, to be obliged to give an account of himself, as it were, every day, — how he spent his mornings, his afternoons, his evenings, — still more to have to give up part of his precious

time to their company, and to have his Sunday plans turned so topsy-turvy that his deficient imagination would get small chance for its much needed cultivation.

The thought made Robert laugh, but in spite of the laugh, the situation bothered him. He had not before realized how precious his present plans for his own improvement had grown to be. When he considered the possibility of their being seriously interrupted, he had a quick impulse to throw the letter away, and to act as if it had never reached him. In an instant, he realized how very mean this would be. In the effort to make amends for it, and get back his own self-respect, he almost went to the other extreme. He almost persuaded himself that he was glad to have the letter, and that it would be quite delightful to see the Marshalls once more. Nevertheless, he did not act upon this make-believe. He might easily have called that afternoon, but there was Madame Sylvestre. He might go in the evening, but there was the play. He finally decided to call the next evening.

In reality, it was two days later when Robert presented himself at the Castiglioni. Even then he chose the busiest part of the afternoon, when he felt sure that they would both be out. He left two cards, a little *convenance* that he had learned from Stephen, and rushed off, as relieved as a schoolboy to escape a lesson. Robert did not have the address on his cards, and so left the Marshalls without any way of communicating with him except through Morgan's. When Robert got back to his room, his New England conscience made itself highly disagreeable. He suffered the qualms that the socially inexperienced do before they have grown accustomed to their own little

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evasions and insincerities. It all ended by his writing a polite little note to Pauline, thanking her for her letter, and asking if he might not call some appointed evening. He suggested an evening several days ahead, so that the intervening Sunday might be wholly safe. Robert winced when he recalled the contrast between this formal performance and that over-fervid letter which had refused to allow itself to be completed.

The return mail brought what Robert felt morally sure it would bring, a friendly letter saying that the Marshalls would be at home, and begging that Robert would come at seven and dine with them.

On the appointed evening, Robert presented himself at the Castiglioni. It was precisely seven. Robert was well dressed and carried himself well. He was a little troubled that the consciousness of his entire fitness gave him so much comfort. He even questioned whether, in this newly entered upon pursuit of excellence, he might not be growing more worldly than his more sober self would quite approve of. But he was not sufficiently troubled to wish it otherwise.

Robert was shown at once into the Marshalls' private *salon*. It was on one of the upper floors, and was very "right." The room was eminently well ordered, just the right proportions and pleasantly old-fashioned. To-night the rose-colored curtains were drawn, several low lights gave a home-like effect, and a few flowers on the centre table completed a picture which was well calculated to appeal to one of Robert's sensitive temperament. As yet the room was unoccupied. Robert had pictured Pauline and her father sitting waiting for him, and this empty

room, in spite of its charm, came as something of a shock. It gave him a chance to change his mood, and to realize that the universe did not, after all, centre in himself, or at least for no one but himself. This charming old *salon* suggested quite a different centre, and he tried to place himself in the new point of view.

Presently one of the side doors opened, and Pauline entered. She had the air of having been dressed for several minutes. It did not seem quite consistent in an out-and-out natural history girl, but it occurred to Robert that Pauline had probably waited some moments on purpose, either to allow him to settle himself, or to allow the room to exert its own hospitality. But whether by design or accident, Robert decided that, from an artistic point of view, it was a clever thing to do,— the momentary wait, the silent room, the expectancy expressed by the light and flowers, and last of all, Pauline's alert, radiant entrance.

Robert was conscious of a decided thrill. He no longer wondered that at Gorphwysfa he had been completely taken off his feet. Even now, after these weeks of European sophistication and after assuring himself of his own established low temperature, he realized with a mental start that the room and everything else had vanished, and that he saw but one object and that was Pauline. It was once more worship, the worship of a lover of excellence in the presence of a visible excellence. But it was now a much more impersonal worship. Robert no longer felt any desire to kiss the strong, shapely hand held out to him, and yet to his own amazement that was precisely what he did do, bending low over Pauline's hand quite after the manner of the French actor he had seen in the

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theatre the night before. That Robert could do this with so much self-possession and grace marked the wide change in his own feelings towards the girl.

Pauline smiled at this unexpected salutation, and said, with a pretty suggestion of a shrug, "When we are in Rome—" But she gave him a hearty welcome in a few quiet words and begged him to be seated. Her father would be in presently, she said. They had been in the country that afternoon, and had been late in returning. Perhaps Robert knew, but her father took an unconscionable time to dress. Robert was quite willing that Mr. Marshall should take the whole evening to dress, and then at once turn about and begin preparing for bed. While Robert had no personal objection to Pauline's father, it would obviously have been very much cosier to have had dinner and the evening with Pauline alone. Robert had pictured this meeting many times, and always it had been full of emotion and agitation. Even in imagination, his cheeks had burned, and his heart had beat against his ribs almost to the point of suffocation. But York Minster stood between those days and these. Now, in the face of the real meeting, his cheeks were not burning, and his heart-beat was as regular as a clock.

Robert even examined Pauline's dress while she was talking, and appraised her much as he might have done a person on the stage. She always dressed well, he remembered that quite distinctly, but to-night it struck him that she was dressed more subtly than usual. She had on a soft gray gown, made without any trimming whatever. The sleeves stopped at the elbow, and the neck was cut perfectly square. The gown carried but one ornament, a



rosette of narrow black velvet ribbon, so large and full that it resembled nothing so much as a black chrysanthemum. Robert watched this rosette with a certain fascination, as it softly rose and fell on Pauline's bosom, for the intense blackness brought out a quality in the gray that he had never seen in gray before. The only touch of color, aside from that in Pauline's wholesome cheeks, was the one flower in her hair, a pink rose, similar to those on the centre table. Robert had a good opportunity to observe all these details, for he was himself doing very little of the talking. In answer to his questions, Pauline was giving him a pleasant account of their doings after they left Bowness, and of Billy's life at Abbotsholme. It got to be after half-past seven. Pauline excused herself to see what could be detaining her father. Presently she returned, but alone. Her father was not well, she said, and had retired. He begged that Robert would excuse him. They would have dinner at once, Pauline added. Robert offered to go immediately, so that Pauline might be with her father. He had a curiously guilty feeling, as if his own wish to dispense with Mr. Marshall had somehow made the poor gentleman ill. But Pauline insisted that Robert should remain. Her father's illness, she said, was merely a slight attack of indigestion; he would soon be asleep. Pauline had evidently given the order for dinner while she was out of the room, for it was now promptly announced, and quite put an end to Robert's hesitation.

The third cover had been dexterously removed, and the little dinner-table to which Pauline led the way looked as if it had been planned for two. It could hardly have been cosier, and Robert felt that if Mr. Marshall had to have

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indigestion, it was genuinely considerate of him to have it on that particular evening.

Pauline made a charming hostess. Every movement was sure and graceful, and she herself, in spite of the questioning stare of the *garçon*, was wholly free from embarrassment. Robert sat opposite her, and found himself feeling very much at home and very contented. He was nothing of a gourmand, but he liked to have things done well. Perhaps he felt that after so many years of the Pinckney Street cuisine, fate owed him something a little better. But genuine as his enjoyment was, it was very pale compared to what it would have been, had the occasion found him in the state of mind of the Bowness days. To be dining alone with Pauline in this friendly fashion would have made him too blissfully happy to eat or even to talk. He would have sat and beamed upon Pauline with a fatuity which would probably have killed any remote chance that he might ever have had of making her think well of him.

But to-night he ate the well-arranged courses with a wholesome, unaffected appetite. He talked or listened, as the case might be, with an ease that added much to his attractiveness. His very lack of emotional quality made him appear to excellent advantage. It is one of those perverse arrangements of fate, about which lovers have a proper right to complain, that when they need their heaviest guns, they find them spiked. There may be a certain benevolence in the arrangement, though, since it is fair to suppose that if a woman cares for a man at his awkwardest, she will be able, in the long years that follow, to get on with him at his best.

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Robert was quite at his best. Pauline, being a natural history girl, was not analytical, but the dinner had gone no farther than the fish before she acknowledged to herself that Robert had improved, and was better company than he used to be. The talk had been desultory and unimportant. In point of expression Donald would have said that it had been rather happy, but in point of content neither one had said anything.

It may have been the realization of a deeper value in Robert that made Pauline say, rather brusquely, "Are n't you tired of loafing yet?"

Robert looked at her in some surprise. "How do you know that I *am* loafing?" he asked.

"Because you all do it. All Americans who come to Europe on no special errand loaf. That's what's the matter with my father. He gets indigestion because he has nothing to do — nothing genuine, I mean. Our trip this afternoon was an out-and-out farce. We knew it was going to be when we started out. We knew it the whole way there and back. When we got home, we were so dead sure of it that father had n't the spunk to get dressed. He just keeled over and went to bed. When he feels that way, he calls it indigestion, but it's just out-and-out, up-and-down ennui."

"How do *you* escape?" Robert ventured to ask.

"I don't!" said Pauline, resolutely.

"You don't *look* bored," Robert suggested.

"No, I'm not bored just now. If I were, I should show it. I generally keep cheerful. But that's because I'm still young, and expect something of the future. If I thought that things would go on just like this, on and on without

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any special purpose, I should be in despair. I don't think that I *could* stand it. It would be too silly, just trotting about from place to place, no reason for going, no reason for staying, no reason for anything!"

"I thought you liked leisure, and approved of it," said Robert.

"I do, thoroughly. But not loafing. That's a different matter, and simply killing."

"What do you want your father to do?" Robert asked, genuinely interested in her seriousness.

"I want him to go home," answered Pauline, promptly. "He's not an old man. He ought to do something. It's killing work, just loafing!"

"Won't he go?" asked Robert.

"Not yet. He'll go in the spring, he says. But I know just how it will be. When spring comes, he will go in the fall. We've been here almost three years now,—just think of it! We came originally for my benefit, to cultivate me, you know. And now we just stay on."

"The process being finished," put in Robert.

"Not at all," protested Pauline. "The process has not been finished. But the material proved poor. Cultivation goes badly because it seems to have no end in view. When I learned French, I took up Italian. I'm glad to know both of them, of course. But I don't want to go on indefinitely learning modern languages, and having nothing to say in any of them! I believe father would have me learn German as perfectly as I know French, and then get Spanish as perfectly as the German. It *would* be rather a dreary prospect, now would n't it?"

"Yes," admitted Robert; "I should n't like it."

## PAULINE

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"Now tell me what you're doing," said Pauline.

"Oh, a lot of things," Robert answered evasively.

"So are we all," said Pauline, calmly. "We're doing a lot of things. A lot of make-believes! I don't imagine you've done a stroke of honest work since you've been in Europe. You haven't the look of a worker!"

Robert laughed. He couldn't help wondering whether the Liverpool tailors had successfully hidden the book-keeper droop in his shoulders.

"Don't be too hard on me," he said. "You know I had to get well first. Remember that I was a genuine invalid when I left Boston."

Pauline shook her head in doubt. "You talk just like the rest of them. They're all invalids. They all have to get well first. That's just a trumpery excuse. You look the picture of health now."

"I don't need any excuse now, not since I've come to Paris, at any rate. And I *am* working hours every day, — honor bright! That was one reason I couldn't call on you sooner."

"Tell me about it," said Pauline. "What is it you are doing?"

Robert had meant to keep his secret, but sitting there face to face with Pauline, he soon found himself yielding to a desire to vindicate himself in her eyes, and telling her everything about his plans, even to his novel use of Sundays.

"Cultivating your imagination?" said Pauline, with a puzzled look on her face. "I always thought that that was a bad thing to do. It's better to stick close to facts."

"On the contrary," cried Robert, with the enthusiasm

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of the new convert, "sticking close to facts means that you don't see them. It takes imagination to see what the facts are! Donald Fergusson even holds that we have it in our power to change the facts; that the world is not a fixed quantity, but something plastic, left for us to shape, and obedient to our will and imagination."

"I hope you don't believe any such nonsense," exclaimed Pauline. "For example, what did you do last Sunday?"

Robert could not help laughing. "You are a terrible cross-examiner," he said. "You would have made a capital lawyer."

"That's just what I should have been, had I been born a man, and had n't such a dislike for quarrelsome people. I should like the fact part of the law, but I know it would make me cross to have people juggle with it and quarrel over it. You have n't told me yet what you did last Sunday."

"Well, in the first place, I got up —"

"I assumed as much," put in Pauline.

"And then I had my bath, and dressed, and drank my very good coffee."

"I assumed that, too," threw in Pauline.

"Then I went to church — to Nôtre Dame."

"I have a picture of it," said Pauline, "taken upstream. And Nôtre Dame looks exactly like a giant pair of opera-glasses. But the service there is rather stupid, I think. If you want something out of the ordinary, you ought to go to the Greek Church. And then what did you do?"

"After that I took one of the steamboats and went up river as far as the Café des Arbres. I got *déjeuner* there, and remained until sunset before I came back to Paris."

"I have been to the Café des Arbres. It's a stupid little place, and simply overrun with artists. What *did* you do with a whole afternoon there?"

"I see that you won't be put off with anything less than the whole truth," said Robert. "I did something rather silly, I am afraid you would say."

"What if I do?" said Pauline. "I might be wrong, and you might be right. In any case, the only thing that counts is what you yourself thought of it. What did you think of it? Did it seem to you silly?"

"No, not entirely silly," Robert answered. "The sketches themselves were poor, but it was worth while to have tried, and I fell in with some nice young fellows studying architecture at the École des Beaux Arts. If I were younger, I almost think that I would join them and study to be an architect."

"How absurd to think of yourself as being old!" exclaimed Pauline. "Why, you're a mere boy! Studying architecture would be a lot better than loafing, or even than cultivating the imagination."

"It would be a poor architect who did n't cultivate his imagination," said Robert. "I don't think you'd care to look at his buildings, much less live in any of them."

"All the same," continued Pauline, "my advice is not to keep up this sort of skirmishing too long. Settle down to something definite and make connections with life."

The dinner had meanwhile reached the coffee stage. Pauline and Robert were lingering over the meal, quite oblivious to the fact that it was already after ten.

The *garçon* had withdrawn his suspicions. Being well-trained in such matters, his intuitions told him that this

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was no ordinary flirtation, but merely a meeting of two old friends. Then he passed to the other extreme, and disapproved of them for being so little sentimental. The gentleman was so clean and nice-looking, and Mademoiselle so beautiful and well dressed! It was really a thousand pities that they were n't lovers. And such an opportunity to make love! He would have kept himself discreetly behind the screen. He retired a number of times, but no matter how quietly he returned, he could never discover that his absence had even been noticed. It was a thousand pities!

Robert realized that it was quite time to go. He was sorry, for he had had a pleasant evening. He took Pauline back to the *salon*, but neither sat down. They stood chatting for a few moments, and then Robert finally left. Pauline gave him her hand cordially. This time he did not kiss it.

When Robert got down to the street, and was stepping into his cab, he remembered that Pauline had not asked him to call again. All the way back to the Avenue de Friedland, he found himself dwelling on this omission. He could not decide whether it had been studied or accidental. He knew that she had enjoyed the evening, for she had said so. It was odd that she had not spoken of seeing him again. Robert had begun to realize that he himself, compared to Pauline, was a distinctly complex person. He tried to fancy what a very simple person would have done under these same conditions,—a child, for instance. That made the problem very easy. A child would have taken it for granted that he would call again, and as soon as he really wanted to. To ask him to come



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would have been wholly unnecessary, even silly. Doubtless Pauline reasoned in some such direct way. It was not a matter of great importance, certainly no longer a life-and-death matter, but it was far more pleasant to feel that Pauline would like to see him from time to time, even frequently, than to believe that she was wholly indifferent. By the time Robert reached the Pension Carpenter, he had reasoned out the matter to his entire satisfaction. At least, this was the conclusion that the cabman came to when he glanced at the size of his *pourboire*. As Robert was undressing, the thought occurred to him that, as dinner guest, he would in any case be expected to call, and that all his fumbling around among simple and complex motives had been quite wide of the mark. Perhaps Pauline was not a child, after all. As he tumbled into bed, he had the feeling that he still had a great deal to learn.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ROBERT CULTIVATES HIS IMAGINATION

ROBERT'S state of mind on the day after the dinner-party was one of considerable perplexity. His self-imposed and fairly regular routine occupied him externally, but did not prevent his thoughts from wandering pretty far afield. Seen through the perspective of a dozen or more hours, the dinner-party was still a success, Pauline's costume still perfect, and she herself still a girl of more than passing interest. When Robert tried to compare her to the Pauline of Gorphwysfa, he had to admit that she had surpassed even herself, — her gown was more subtle in its beauty, her person more commanding in its good looks, her poise more assured. Yet at Gorphwysfa he had fallen in love with her, while in Paris he was appreciative, even interested, but certainly nothing more. He was greatly perplexed. Could such a feeling have been wholly an illusion, or had his standards undergone so radical a change that Pauline no longer satisfied them? Whatever the difference, however, he was not called upon to decide its exact nature. Without precisely voicing the matter, Robert had quite determined that Pauline should not again be a disturbing factor in his own life. He hoped that they might be good friends, — he was sure of that. As Pauline had not asked him to call again, it was quite in his own hands as to when he should go.

In the morning, when Robert was a trifle irritated that Pauline occupied so much of his thoughts, he decided that

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he would certainly not call for at least a week. But in the afternoon, it seemed to him that it would be only civil to call at the Castiglioni, and at least inquire after Mr. Marshall's health. It was getting on towards five o'clock when Robert arrived at the hotel. Both Pauline and Mr. Marshall were at home, and both were in the *salon* when Robert was shown up.

Mr. Marshall was so hearty in his welcome, and so profuse in his apologies at having failed to appear the evening before, that Robert forgave himself for his own disabling wish, and even got to the point where he was genuinely glad to see Mr. Marshall again.

Pauline gave Robert a frank welcome, which added a trifle to his perplexity. It was everything that the most socially exacting could ask, and equally devoid of anything like significance. Robert was not hunting for a meaning. Those who merely mean to be good friends may not ask anything more than the most non-committal friendship. But he was conscious of a certain lack of flavor in the triangular talk that followed. Nothing was said that might not just as well have been left unsaid. The talk was friendly, but quite profitless. Matters went rather better when the tea-table was brought in. The large brass tray was a beautiful specimen of Indian enameling, and the tea equipage and the china cups fit topics for additional talk. In his recently awakened love for beauty, Robert was genuinely interested in all beautiful objects. His appreciation did not fail to take in the fact that Pauline, in her dark blue gown and her wholesome color, added much to the charm of the scene. She presided at the tea-table very gracefully. To have her

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hand one a cup of tea was to have an added taste of pleasure. Robert's memories of Pauline were all outdoor memories. He found it hard to imagine her in the house. He knew that she would not have shared his great experience in York Minster, or even have vaguely understood it. But last evening and this afternoon showed Pauline in a distinctly new light. She was not only domestic, but gracefully domestic. Robert realized that if he thought of Pauline again, it would have to be with these additions, and that he would involuntarily think of her again, the experience of the morning made him feel very sure. He could scarcely forget a girl who was at once so well put up and so much of a person.

The more tea Mr. Marshall drank, the more talkative he grew, and fortunately the quality of his talk improved with its flow. Robert had listened first out of courtesy, but later out of genuine interest, as Mr. Marshall discoursed upon tea and the tea ceremony in Japan. After his third cup, however, he was quite talked out. He assured Robert that he never allowed himself more than three cups, and he gave this assurance with the impressive manner of those who set some purely arbitrary limit upon their indulgences, and call it high virtue.

Pauline's contributions to conversation seldom followed the lead of the last speaker. They came usually as sharp breaks in the current thought. It was so in this case. When she recognized her father's withdrawal from reminiscence, she turned to Robert and asked, "How do your French lessons come on? Have you a good teacher?"

"I suppose I'm getting on," said Robert, "and I suppose I have a good teacher. You know I've nothing to

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compare matters with. I have never studied a foreign language before, except of course a little Latin. Just now I'm mostly bewildered. Madame Sylvestre speaks in French, but with such rapidity, and in such a torrent of words, that I only catch about one out of a hundred."

"I thought so," said Pauline. "They all do the same. I don't know whether it's because they want to display their knowledge, or whether it's because talking is so much easier than teaching."

"My daughter has always been rather a critical pupil, as you can see," put in Mr. Marshall. "She makes her teachers earn their money."

"I was thinking," continued Pauline, quite as if her father had not spoken, "that it might have been better if you had come to me for your lessons. I know the language, and I also remember some of the difficulties in getting to know it. The latter is evidently beyond Madame Sylvestre."

"That is awfully kind of you," Robert hastened to say.

"It strikes me," said Mr. Marshall, "that you would be taking the bread out of the mouth of some decayed gentlewoman. I should not approve of that."

"A consistent protectionist?" suggested Robert.

"It would be nothing of the sort, father," protested Pauline. "I did n't mean that Mr. Pendexter should *pay* for the lessons!"

"That would n't be any consolation to the decayed gentlewoman," said Mr. Marshall. "The question is not whether Mr. Pendexter pays or not. It's whether he pays *her*!"

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They all laughed.

"I'm not so stupid as that," answered Pauline. "But I've no desire to protect any one. If your decayed gentlewoman can't teach French as well as I can, she ought to do something else for a living. Are you committed to her for any length of time, Mr. Pendexter?"

"I'm afraid so," Robert replied; "at least as long as I stay in Paris."

"If you have the time, and would like it, I will gladly give you a lesson on top of Madame's. Then you would get a lot of practice, and ought to make famous progress. What do you say?"

"I should like it very much, and I think you're awfully kind," said Robert. "But it's not a question of *my* time. I think I have no right to take so much of *yours*."

"Happily that does n't concern you," answered Pauline, calmly. "I have a right to do what I like with my own time. All I should ask would be that you must be perfectly frank. If you found the lessons not worth the time they took, would you say so?"

"Yes," said Robert, smiling. "I can't imagine it, but if the unexpected happened, I should up and say so!"

"I think if you did," put in Mr. Marshall, "it would make my daughter think much better of all her old teachers. She has a notion that teaching is very easy work."

"Really, I haven't, father. I know it must be difficult, for so few do it well. But I do think, if one can't teach, one ought n't to pretend to."

"That's sound doctrine, at any rate," said Robert.

"Then come to-morrow afternoon about this time,"

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Pauline replied. "Father and I are nearly always home by dark. We can drink tea and talk French together. Father shall see whether I'm a good teacher or not!"

"The proof of the pudding, you know," said Mr. Marshall. "I shall judge you by the way Mr. Pendexter speaks French a month from now."

It was in this unexpected way that Robert found himself drinking tea with Pauline nearly every afternoon during the succeeding weeks. It must be confessed that Pauline's lessons lost nothing from their social character, and in point of merit much exceeded those given by the self-satisfied Madame Sylvestre. Not knowing of the supplementary lesson, however, the poor old gentlewoman was much gratified at Robert's phenomenal progress. She put it down partly to the fact that he was a very intelligent young man, and still more to the fact that he enjoyed the advantage of her own most excellent teaching. Miss Carpenter was duly informed of this gratifying result, and heard so much about it that soon she fell into the habit of speaking French to Robert at the table. He felt himself an arch-hypocrite, but the satisfaction of the old gentlewoman was so genuine and childlike that he never had the heart to undeceive her.

Robert had hesitated to accept so much from Pauline, but in fact there was no way out of it. Furthermore, he soon discovered that with Pauline's passion for thoroughness, it gave her genuine pleasure to be doing something useful. She might doubt the cultural effect of modern languages taken *ad libitum*, but given a young man bent on knowing French, and the work of seeing that he knew it well appealed to her strongly. Whether she also en-

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joyed Robert's society remained entirely problematical, for she gave no sign. Mr. Marshall always drank tea with them, but, his third cup safely on its way, he commonly withdrew to his own room. Pauline appeared wholly unconscious as to whether Mr. Marshall was present or absent. She drilled Robert in the parts of speech with a thoroughness that made French grammar seem for the time the one object in life worth living for. The regular and irregular verbs passed in orderly procession, until Robert could almost have conjugated them in his sleep. His pronunciation came in for constant correction.

Neither of Robert's teachers could quite realize how hard he worked. He had left the high school at the end of the second year, and had never acquired the study habit. All he got, he worked very hard for. But he was willing to work very hard. He wanted to know French, and he wanted to satisfy Pauline. There was probably a little personal pride in this industry, but the New England sense of justice had also much to do with it. Robert realized that this was the only way in which he could even partially repay Pauline's very considerable kindness. As he advanced, their talk grew interesting for its own sake. They read French books and discussed them over their tea. But Pauline always selected the books, and as a rule they read them separately. They were never novels, or books that by any stretch of language could be called imaginative. They were amazingly serious, — books of travel, scientific books, essays on social questions. Robert was more and more struck with the masculine character of Pauline's mind. He came to understand the attraction which the law might have for her.



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Once or twice Pauline and Robert went to the theatre together. But Pauline did not care for plays. If necessary to the understanding of some social problem, she would read them, solely for their content, but the attempt to give them reality on the stage struck her as absurd and, on the whole, a stupid waste of time. She could easily read a play in an hour, while it took three hours or more to have it dragged out on the stage, to say nothing of the time spent in going and coming.

Robert was too busy to be very analytical, but he could not fail to realize that he was leading a dual life: on the one side, a life of prosaic hard work, and on the other side a life of expanding dreams. The association with Pauline was matter-of-fact to a degree that sometimes threatened to grow painful. Robert felt that it was a safe anchor, but at the same time he could not help wishing that it might have that lighter touch of the spirit which made talk with Sappho and Miss Frothingham a thing to remember.

At the gymnasium, Robert had expected nothing but hard, dull work. He had no enthusiasm for athletics, and always skipped the sporting news in the daily paper. But he had made up his mind that he would persevere in the work, no matter how much it bored him. By rare good fortune, however, he was not bored. Quite by accident he had stumbled on a master who was an enthusiast of the first order, and worked quite in the spirit of an artist. With it all, he possessed a deeper philosophy, which rose almost to the height of a religion. He had a way, too, of seeing the best in his pupils, and trying to bring the rest of their bodily equipment up to it. Robert interested him. Instead of dwelling upon the crooked shoulder and general

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lack of muscular development, he saw only a wholesome young body, unspoiled by dissipation or abuse. To give it greater strength and power, he worked with an enthusiasm that inspired Robert to do his best. At first this enthusiasm merely amused Robert. He put it down to Gallic exaggeration. But one day, after the work had been in progress something over three weeks, the master re-measured Robert's slender body, and recorded the faint beginning of an improvement. "We shall yet make you a beautiful man," he cried. "You will be able to do a great work! I could not myself write a book, or paint a picture, or sing a song, or do any of the things that are great; but *voilà*, through you I shall do one of those things. You are my agent, my messenger. You will do this because I, even I, Gaspard Renoux, give you the strength. It was worth while that I lived, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

It was then that Robert understood why this patient old master worked over his own poorly developed body with such genuine devotion. At one end of Gaspard's gymnasium was a small office. It contained a few instruments for measuring the body. On the walls were outlines of perfect proportions, elaborate tables of proper weight and dimensions for given heights. In a corner stood an excellent cast of the Apollo Belvedere. Over the writing-table a substantial book-shelf carried a score or more of volumes on physiology, anatomy, and physical culture, in French, English, and German. It was the old man's study, — one might almost say his chapel. What he worshiped was bodily excellence. It was a new point of view for Robert. He had always associated gymnastic work with prize fighters and the whole family of tiresome athletes, bent on

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out-punching, out-running, out-throwing, out-jumping, or otherwise outdoing the rest of the world, but themselves wholly uninteresting. But this old man possessed an entirely different goal. He cared nothing for such useless displays of muscular power. He was almost poetic in his imaginative conception of bodily perfection.

Robert's indifference once turned into interest, it was easy for the interest to grow into enthusiasm. Yet all the while the incongruity of the situation held his attention. The French language, with all its subtlety and wealth of literature, was for Pauline so much technique, and for her pupil, in spite of his desire to get at the soul of it, very little more. The work was wholly objective, and such inner culture as Robert got out of it was a stolen fruit rather than a worked-for result. But with Gaspard, surrounded as he was with anatomical charts, ponderous books on physiology, and the most material-looking apparatus, the work in physical culture was largely spiritual.

Pauline and Gaspard were both such marked personalities, such fixed quantities in their very different ways, that Robert's experience in their hands was singularly uniform. With Pauline it was always the same thing, a hard, brilliant, technical perfection in a language which is in reality the most subtle of all modern instruments for the expression of the life of the spirit. With Gaspard it was always the search for beauty, poise, usableness, the perfecting of a marvelous tool for the still more marvelous purposes of the spirit. This reversal of what one would have expected kept up during all the weeks of Robert's tutelage.

Could Stephen and Donald have looked in upon the

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work, they would have approved of it, at least as far as results were concerned. Robert was fast becoming an accomplished French scholar, and more slowly the awkward, good-looking country boy, with the uneven shoulders and doubtful carriage, was changing into an assured man of the world, with so good a bearing that Gaspard, in his enthusiasm, declared that Robert might almost be mistaken for a Frenchman. To Gaspard this was fulsome praise.

But these experiences, excellent as they were, had, as I have said, the disadvantage of too great uniformity. Donald in his careless way, a way so light as to seem wholly unimportant, and so penetrating as to amount to a rare insight, had always insisted upon the unexpected as an essential element in all culture. Even the symphony, the oratorio, the grand opera itself, must have its surprises, its ups and downs, its level places and its mountain peaks, or it grows commonplace. Robert felt the excellence of his work with both Pauline and Gaspard, but he also felt its monotony, and came to value the free Sundays more and more. Pauline and Mr. Marshall had given Robert many invitations for Sunday, — dinners, luncheons, expeditions of all sorts, — but Robert steadily declined on the ground of other engagements. Pauline at last saw that he really did not wish to accept, and not only ceased to ask him, but broke her father of the same habit. Gaspard had once shyly proposed a Sunday excursion. But even this Robert declined, and did it in so considerate a manner that the old man was not in the least offended. It would have meant more anatomy, and on Sunday Robert wanted neither French nor anatomy. He frankly

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wanted the unexpected, the thing that Donald got out of life and that he missed.

Every Sunday Robert turned out of a morning with a pleasant sense of expectancy. The day might bring much or little, but in any case the gates of possibility were open. It commonly happened that the events of the day were rather trivial, and the New England conscience complained of small returns. But an instinct lately aroused in Robert successfully downed the New England conscience, and made good its own contention that the total result of those experiences was eminently worth while. Any one Sunday might be uneventful, but the total impression made by a succession of Bohemian Sundays was an education. Robert had no desire to see the world in its meaner aspects. *La haute Bohème* was what he sought. It was hardly possible in Paris and on Sundays to go about as much as Robert did without touching elbows with the other sort. Robert's freshness and good looks marked him out as attractive game. He had not foreseen this result, and his first encounter with the murky side of the world sent him home shivering with disgust. It was a little thing, — a painted lady had spoken to him, — but it vulgarized the day. He felt that he must have an immediate bath and fresh linen, and send his very clothes to the cleanser's.

The next week Robert changed his route, and took *déjeuner* at another of the little river restaurants frequented by artists and the lively spirits of the Latin Quarter. There was a great deal of freedom in both speech and easy acquaintance, distinctly more than his Aunt Matilda Pendexter would have approved of, but Robert soon found that

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under all the gayety and freedom there was a wholesome harmlessness. His own instincts were very true, and each week he trusted them more. On these excursions he had the curious feeling that he carried both Stephen and Donald with him, and he tried with tolerable success to look at this lively, unconventional world through their larger eyes,—to look at it with Stephen's common sense and Donald's quick insight. Sometimes Robert fell in with a group that no large charity could wholly absolve from being a bit off color. Robert got away as soon as he courteously could, but he no longer ran. He began to see the impotence of this under-world, and though he hated it, he no longer feared it. As his own spirit grew strong and free, he found that he could touch elbows with all the world without feeling either stained or degraded.

It was after several Sundays of such mixed experience that Robert was returning to Paris one Sunday afternoon on one of the small river steamboats. He had been sketching most of the day, and felt rather hopeful about the result. He could not make his figures look other than very wooden, but his trees began to have some individuality, and his buildings—the things he cared most about—were lined in with considerable firmness and accuracy. Robert sat looking over his sketch-book, dwelling particularly on the sketch he liked the best of all, the tower of an old country church. The boat was well filled with returning voyagers. Robert had not noticed a young Russian girl who sat next to him, and who also carried sketching implements. She could hardly have avoided seeing his sketches, had she tried, and her interest was evidently too keen to allow her to try. She was a trifle

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amused that Robert should linger so long over his old tower, for on the face of it there was nothing remarkable about it. She, too, examined it critically. She pointed to one of the lines with her well-sharpened pencil, and said in excellent French, "Do you not see that the line is wrong? It ought to go this way" — and she made a couple of rapid strokes on the paper with her own pencil.

Some weeks earlier, probably Robert would have shut the book with a disapproving snap and deliberately walked off. But now even the impulse to do so was lacking, for he recognized that the girl spoke quite impersonally, and solely as an artist. "Is it wrong?" he asked, looking at it critically. "Yes, you're right. It is wrong. Thank you. I will soon make it right." Robert quickly pulled out his own eraser and pencil, and corrected the erring line. "There," he said, looking at it with his head to one side, "it is all right now, — is it not?"

The girl laughed, a pleasant, friendly laugh. "It is not altogether right. But it is better. It will do. May I look at the rest of the sketches?"

"Certainly, if you like," answered Robert. "They are not much good. This is the best one."

He handed her the book, and the girl turned over all the pages, examining each sketch quickly, but with surprising thoroughness. "You are also an artist?" she asked a little dubiously.

"I?" exclaimed Robert. "Why, I never sketched before in all my life. I just do it for fun and to help me see things."

The girl looked at him quizzically. "Then it is to cover

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up something that you pretend to sketch? You are a revolutionist, perhaps?"

It was now Robert's turn to laugh. He had always thought of himself as a very mild-looking young person. Then he thought of what Stephen and Donald would say to such a suggestion, and he laughed again. "Nothing so lively as that," he answered the girl. "I am only a wanderer and half-student just now. I was a clerk in America."

The girl looked at him in some astonishment. Then she burst out, "My God, you could be something better than that. You might at least be an architect. It is too late to be an artist, but an architect, — yes, that would be possible, — if you have the imagination!"

"I wonder if I have," said Robert. "My poet friend says I have n't any imagination. Sometimes I think he is right and sometimes I think he is wrong. To-day I think he is wrong."

The girl handed him back his sketch-book, and asked, as simply as a child might, "Would you care to see my sketches?"

"I should like to see them very much," answered Robert. "If you had n't been good enough to offer, I meant to take the liberty of asking."

Robert kept the book for some time. It was filled with sketches so clever and so much to the point that they made his own work seem worse than crude. He handed back the book with a sigh.

"It is not necessary to ask whether *you* are an artist," he said. "You are a good one, and no mistake."

"On the contrary," said the girl, "like yourself, I am a pretender!"



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"But your sketches are splendid," cried Robert, looking at her quickly to see if she were in earnest.

"Yes, they are very good," she admitted, quite impersonally. "I might be an artist, if I liked. But I am one in name only. It was necessary to get the passport. They would not have let me come from Russia, if they had known my real purpose. To study art, — yes, they could understand that. But to help my country, — my God, they do not know what the words mean!" The girl spoke rapidly and with great feeling. Then she added with equal rapidity, "Do you see that tall man over there, leaning against the railing, — yes, the one with a beard and the light overcoat. He has been watching us the whole time. He thinks that I do not know him, but I do. He is a spy, and already he suspects me. But he is a stupid bear. He only understands French when one speaks very slowly, and when I talk like this, he does not catch a word. He thinks we are having an argument over our work. When you speak to me, you must speak either very low or very quickly."

Robert was truly mystified, "But I do not understand," he said. "Why should you not be in Paris, if you want to, and why should you have to pretend to study art?"

"Ah, you are an American," said the girl. "You do not know Russia. But I think I can trust you. Well, then, I am here in Paris to study chemistry."

"To study chemistry," echoed Robert. "What for?"

"Not so loud," continued the girl. "I study it — for a purpose!" Quick as a flash she drew in her own notebook the picture of an exploding bomb, and as quickly rubbed it out again. "Now you know!" she said.

Robert felt as if he were dreaming. He looked at the

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girl with renewed interest. She could not have been over twenty, and was as fair and innocent-looking as his cousins at Bolton. For the moment, he ignored all the other issues, and thought only of the possible danger of such studies to a charming young girl who could sketch so cleverly. "But are you not yourself in great danger?" he asked.

"It may be," she answered simply; "but what is one life? When our country is concerned, we do not know any danger!"

Miss Matilda Pendexter would have considered Robert in very bad company, and would have been still more shocked could she have known how genuinely thrilled he was and how sympathetic.

The steamboat was slowing up at one of the landing-stages on the outskirts of the city. The girl rose hastily. "This is my landing-place," she said. "Please come with me to the gangway."

Robert was on his feet in an instant. The girl led the way, and managed to pass very near the man in the light overcoat. He stared at them stupidly, and pricked up his ears as the girl turned to Robert and said very distinctly and very slowly, "I am glad that you like my sketches. I shall yet have a picture in the *Salon*!"

"I am sure you will," said Robert, quite in the spirit of the game. At the gang-plank, he asked in a low tone, "Would it be better for me to get off with you?"

"No, thank you," she answered. "I am quite safe now. Good-by"; and she disappeared up the gangway and into the gathering darkness.

The little steamer pulled out into the stream, and Rob-

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ert stood gazing into space. He had felt a distinct sense of disappointment when the girl declined his company, though afterwards he acknowledged to himself that it would have been awkward if she had allowed him to see her home.

When Robert got back to the Avenue de Friedland, he told himself that even Donald might envy him the afternoon's adventure, but honesty forced him to admit that Donald would have made much more of it. Donald would have stepped off the steamboat with the girl, and would have gone home with her without so much as asking leave. He would have met her compatriots and co-conspirators, would doubtless have had them all to dinner at some queer little French restaurant, and finally would have gone to his own lodgings late at night so full of information about the world of revolutionary intrigue that he might ever after pose as an authority on Russian affairs.

Robert checked this vivid picture of possibilities by remembering some funny cartoons in an old volume of "Harper's," which graced the library at Bolton. They represented what Mr. Washington Jones thought he would do under certain circumstances and what he actually did. Robert felt that his own performance that afternoon brought him into the same class with poor Mr. Jones. The only comfort he got out of the retrospect was that at least he had been imaginative enough to see the latent possibilities of the situation, and that this in itself was a slight advance.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GREAT NEWS FROM BOLTON

ROBERT was not a frequent visitor at the banker's. He had so little mail that the coming and going of the trans-Atlantic steamers caused him no excitement. He had not even thought of asking to have his mail forwarded to the *pension*. He only dropped in at the banking offices on the Boulevard Haussman when he needed money, and as he always drew a thousand francs at a time, this seldom happened more than once a month. After his early visits, he became so engrossed in the daily routine of his life in Paris, that fully five weeks elapsed before he again went to Morgan's. Robert drew his customary thousand francs on his letter of credit, and was already making his way to the lift, when he caught sight of the crowd of tourists eagerly inquiring for letters at the post-office department. Robert thought that there might possibly be a letter for him, and so dropped into line and waited. Even then he almost gave up the quest, for it seemed to him that each tourist in the long line was slower than the one before, and they all seemed bent on making the poor clerk back of the counter personally responsible for any deficiency in their own mail. Instead of being irritated, however, the clerk seemed increasingly amused. He was young and chubby, with light curly hair and dancing eyes, and no end of good humor. In reality he also had sharp ears, and he had just heard a pretty young girl say under her breath to her companion, "If that cherub has

a letter for me from Jack, I could just hug him!" The boy clerk hoped that he had the desired letter, and was speculating as to whether he might dare say to the girl, "I hope it *is* from Jack!" So his good humor increased the nearer the pretty girl got to the counter. Robert was just ahead of her, and consequently, when he reached the counter and gave his name, the chubby clerk sang out "Mr. Robert Pendexter" quite as a butler might do at some grand reception. The girl back of Robert giggled and whispered to her companion, "It's a good name, and he's good-looking. You'd better scrape an acquaintance," and Robert turned very pink, while the second girl told Jack's sweetheart how outrageous she was and begged her to hush.

The chubby clerk looked in the new mail and the old mail. When he returned with his finds, he sang out in the same genial way, "Three letters to-day, Mr. Pendexter."

Robert was too much surprised to remember Jack, or to listen to hear whether the much desired letter had come. Nor did he hear the pretty girl whisper. "No chance, Dorothy, two of them were in a girl's handwriting!"

Robert carried his letters to the reading-room, and established himself in a far corner at one of the little tables overlooking the Boulevard. Two of the letters were from Priscilla, and one was from Stephen. All bore the post-mark of Bolton. This rather perplexed Robert, and he handled the unopened letters for some time, wondering how it came to be. The first letter from Priscilla was already over five weeks old, and the second one had evidently come in the last steamer. It bore the same date as Stephen's. Donald would have said that the culture of the

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imagination had made small progress, could he have seen that Robert in his methodical way passed over the fresher letters without suspecting that their identity of date carried any significance with it, and proceeded very deliberately to read the old letter first. Priscilla's handwriting was fairly plain to any one at all accustomed to the vagaries of feminine penmanship, but Robert was not in the least accustomed to them. He found the reading of the letter a matter of time, and some difficulty. As nearly as he could make out, it ran as follows : —

BOLTON, MASSACHUSETTS,  
November eleventh.

MY DEAR ROBERT: — It was good to have your last letter, and to know that you are really and truly better. I have n't quite forgiven you for running off and leaving us without a word of good-by, — I don't count that scrappy little note from Pinckney Street. And Martha and Mattie are even more outraged than I. They are fairly cross at you! But I must n't send disagreeable things on such a long journey. It was even better to hear of you and all your worldly doings through your friend, Mr. Stephen Morse. He came out to see us directly after he landed. It was funny to hear him call you *Little Pen*, but I think it's because he cares a lot for you. He didn't talk of much else, indeed, but you and your precious doings. Mattie says that our only importance in the world, at least in Mr. Morse's eyes, comes from the fortunate fact that we are your own very first cousins! But though it amused Mattie, and made Martha a little snippy, we were really ever so glad to have such complete news of you. It was so

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up-to-date, that it seemed as if Mr. Morse must have flown directly from you to us, instead of coming in the ordinary way. He assured us, though, that a real steamer had brought him to New York, an express train to Boston, a very shabby accommodation train to Hudson, and a fast horse and a rubber-tired buggy to Bolton. I think you must have told Mr. Morse a lot about us, and a whole lot that was n't true! It was day before yesterday, Thursday afternoon, and of course Bridget was out. Martha and Mattie were both dressing, so I had to go to the door. You won't care to know what I had on, but nevertheless I must tell you, for otherwise you will never believe what followed, and as it's all your fault for telling Mr. Morse such silly things about me, I have a great mind not to spare you one little detail. I shan't make a separate paragraph of it either, as Miss Conant taught us we ought to, for then I know you would simply skip it, and rush on to the next to see if there was really any sense in my letter after all. Well, then, my dear Robert, you must know that I've been very extravagant this fall, and have got me several pretty new dresses. I know that Aunt Matilda would n't approve of me at all, but then, as Mattie says, the question in getting new clothes is not whether aunt would approve of them, but whether I've got the money to pay for them. I have n't gone into debt, so I have n't been so dreadfully wicked, I suppose. All the dresses turned out well, both Martha and Mattie say so, and that, you know, helps the conscience heaps. If they'd turned out badly and had n't been becoming, I should have felt very wicked. I do feel very wicked a lot of the time anyway, for I do so many things that poor aunt would never have allowed.

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When the weight of my sins gets too heavy, I go to Mattie and confess. She cheers me up wonderfully. She says that aunt did a great many things that *I* did n't approve of, and that probably I am just squaring up the account. Isn't Mattie too funny? I think she ought to have been a lawyer. At any rate, she is an awfully good one to confess to. She has kept Martha and me from doing a lot of silly things that Mrs. Perkins and the other neighbors seemed to think we ought to do, such as dressing in black, and keeping the shutters bowed, and trying to mope indoors and feel a lot sorrier than we really are. I hope you won't think we're all very dreadful, but really we do just the other thing, and poor Mrs. Perkins is scandalized. I think she would stop coming to see us, only she wants to know just how dreadful we are. We wear our best dresses every day in the week if we want to, and we have every blessed shutter in the house fastened tight open, and we are outdoors so much, all three of us, that we are just as brown as the summer people, and are no longer taken for "natives." We have fixed up the house so you would hardly know it. I mean inside, of course. There is not a single inch of haircloth in sight anywhere in the whole house. Martha covered the best pieces of furniture with a pretty French chintz that Mattie found in at Hovey's, and the other pieces we just gave away right and left. There is n't a single carpet left downstairs, not even that everlasting English brussels in the parlor. What do you think of that? We packed every one of them off to Bromfield Street for what they would bring, and got some new cheap rugs with the money. Mattie and I started to paint the floors ourselves, but the turpentine made us sick, and we



had to get Mr. Tuttle to do it for us. The house looks ever so pretty now. Even Mrs. Perkins says so, though she shakes her head and seems to think that it's disrespectful to Aunt Matilda's memory to have it look so pretty. When Mr. Tuttle came to bring his bill, we showed him around, and he opened his eyes so wide, I was afraid he'd never get them shut again. He stood quite speechless when he came to the parlor and saw the new chintz and the dotted Swiss curtains. As he was leaving, though, he found his tongue and said to me, "Law, Miss Priscilla, it's just grand. It do look like a different house." Mattie called it a meaty remark, for she said it expressed not only Mr. Tuttle's opinion of the house as it *is*, but also as it *was*. We haven't done much to the outside of the house yet, but next week the carpenters are to put a nice square porch at the front door. I am awfully glad that aunt never would have it done before, for I'm morally sure that when it came to the point, she would have had ugly turned posts and scroll-saw brackets, and would have just spoiled the whole appearance of the house. But now we are to have a Colonial porch, with quaint seats on each side, and, thanks to your friend Mr. Morse, an architect he knows is to draw the design for us. Martha was afraid that a Boston architect would be too expensive, but Mr. Morse said that the house was much too good to be spoiled by a carpenter's botch, and that his architect friend was n't busy, and would be jolly glad to do it for nothing, he knew he would. I like the way Mr. Morse talks. Martha says it's slangy, and that you can't always parse his sentences. But you always know what he means, and I never saw a sentence yet that I *did* want to parse. Earlier in the fall

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we had some gorgeous chrysanthemums on each side of the front door, and we 've had those straggly lilac-bushes cut down that used to press up against the west windows of the parlor and hide the sunset. When the new porch is finished, and the front door and the shutters are painted just the right green, we shall be very smart-looking. As it is, Mr. Morse says it's the most distinguished-looking house in the village; but that does n't mean much, for you know how many houses there were when you left, and there is only one more being built now. But I meant to tell you about what I wore, and here I am off on a long tale concerning the house. I had a presentiment Thursday afternoon that we should have company and perhaps a stranger, so I put on my very prettiest dress. Mattie says that my presentiments in that direction are vivid enough, but that they don't count for much, as I'm always moved to put on my best clothes. Anyhow, I'm very glad that I did have the presentiment on Thursday, and that I did dress in my best bib and tucker. Just now, that is, since last Saturday, this happens to be a white serge dress that is very becoming to me, so becoming that Mattie says it makes me look *almost* pretty. Is n't Mattie provoking? But if she ever did pay me a compliment without a string to it, I should probably faint dead away, so perhaps it's just as well she never does. I had n't worn the dress once, for on Sunday it rained, and I was too cross and out of sorts even to try the thing on. Earlier in the week, we had all been too busy putting the finishing touches on the house to think of anything else. It was great good luck that things were all in order again, and that I had got dressed. Poor Aunt Matilda never liked to hear me call

anything luck. She wanted it called a dispensation of Divine Providence, but I never could bring myself to it. It seems to me rather frivolous to connect up house furbishing and new clothes with Providence. How do you feel about it? It seems to me just downright good luck. But I can't seem to get to that new dress. You might think it is very grand. It really is n't. It's just a simple full skirt with those up and down tucks they put in them nowadays, and a perfectly stunning coat, with just the tiniest rim of baby-blue cloth around the lapels and on the sleeves. I have a special hat to match, a cream white felt with a broad brim and a lovely fluffy roll of blue veiling wound around the crown. You see how frivolous I am. I even bought a brand-new pair of gloves, long corn-colored undressed kids, that are a joy. I had put on the whole thing, hat, gloves, and all, just to see how they would look together, and was parading up and down my room in front of the glass, when the doorbell rang. I slipped off one glove, but I had n't the heart to disturb anything else, so I ran downstairs just as I was. When I opened the door, there stood a young man grinning from ear to ear, and looking just as cool and calm and collected as if I were n't standing there before him blushing in the silliest way up to the very roots of my hair. I knew at once that it was your friend Mr. Morse, for there was something rather foreign and distinguished-looking about him. He pulled off his hat and grabbed my hand before I'd had a chance to say a word. "Good afternoon," he said. "I think this must be Miss Priscilla Pendexter." I said it was, and that I supposed it must be Mr. Morse. Then we both giggled, like any school-children. I don't know whether I asked

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him in or not, but somehow we found ourselves in the parlor. Mr. Morse looked around in surprise. "What a beautiful room!" he said. "It does n't look like New England. Really it does n't. It looks like Paris!" That made me like him right off. Then he said, "And how did you know, may I ask, that it was Stephen Morse? Were you expecting me?" I said of course that you'd mentioned in your last letter that he was coming home, and might come out and call. I asked him how he knew that I was Priscilla. "Well, if you must know," he said, in that funny confidential way of his, "it was in this fashion. Little Pen told me that he had three cousins, sisters, and that the prettiest one was named Priscilla!" What a silly you were to tell him such nonsense. It was dreadfully impertinent of Mr. Morse, too, and I did n't know whether to laugh or pout. But I finally decided to laugh, for he was so funny about it. I answered back that his argument was n't the least bit convincing, for he had n't seen Martha or Mattie yet. "That is very true," he said, sober as a judge, "but I knew they could n't be any prettier, so I concluded they were n't as pretty." How is that for a compliment, up and down, north and south, right and left, and without any string to it! I asked if he'd been in Ireland, but he said he had n't. Then he seemed to notice for the first time that I had my hat and one glove on, and asked if I were going out, perhaps waiting for a bubble and a bubbler. I did n't tell him that I'd never been in an automobile in my life. Just for mischief I answered that I might have been waiting for a rubber-tired buggy and a flatterer. I did n't think till afterwards how it might sound. I'm afraid it sounded very forward, for he said, "By Jove,

that's better yet. It's a jolly afternoon, and I was wishing as I drove over from Hudson that I might ask you to go out with me." I asked if he meant it, and he said, "Sure, never more in earnest in my life. Come, there's not a moment to lose!" I thought of course that he referred to the short afternoons, and suggested that the sun would not go down for at least a couple of hours. We had got to the gate by that time, for Mr. Morse was almost running. He lowered his voice and said in the drollest way, "I'm really too honest to be a lawyer. I did n't mean *that*. I meant that your sisters might come down, and in a buggy there's only room for two, you know!" That made it seem more like a lark than ever. You can imagine what Martha and Mattie thought when they peeped through the upstairs windows and saw me in my best bib and tucker driving off with a strange man. I quite forgot to tell them. Martha said afterwards that she called out to me, just loud enough to make her feel that, whatever happened, she had done her duty, but not loud enough for me possibly to hear. What a ride it was! Mr. Morse did n't know a little bit about driving, and the horse was pretty lively, but that only made it the more fun. We went up through Harvard, and as far as Groton School. It was after dark when we got home, and cold as Greenland. It was only the thought that my new dress was so becoming that kept me from being frozen stiff. Martha and Mattie were regular trumps. They had the house all lighted up and the loveliest supper all ready to put on the table. They guessed who it was, and tried to have things right. Mr. Morse was awfully good, too. He said he'd never enjoyed a ride so much in his life. Bridget got home in time

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to wait on table, and in her new cap and apron did us proud. Every once in a while Mr. Morse looked a little surprised and puzzled. What ever did you tell him about us anyway? I think he 'd made up his mind that we were back-country people, and ate in the kitchen! I 'd give my next quarter's interest money to know just what he thought of us all. *We* all thought that he was delightful, even Martha, in spite of her snippy remarks. Mr. Morse stayed until almost eleven, and he's coming out to-morrow for dinner. To-morrow will be Sunday, you know, in case you've forgotten the calendar by the time this letter reaches you. I hope you feel duly complimented, Mr. Robert, for this is the very longest letter I ever wrote in my life, and I shall never write you another one, not even a scrap, until I have a letter from you, and almost as long. Now, mind! Martha and Mattie send love. Mattie says if your verse-maker is as nice as Mr. Morse, just to trot him out!

Your affectionate cousin,

PRISCILLA.

Robert had begun Priscilla's letter a little dismayed at its length and somewhat regretful at having to puzzle out so many sheets of handwriting. But the letter was so full of Stephen that he was sorry to come to the end. He pondered over it a long while, for in addition to giving such a lively picture of his friend, it carried him back to Bolton so vividly that he quite forgot for the moment that he was in Paris. Moreover, he had thought of the girls as standing still just where he left them. But it was quite evident that they, too, had been blossoming out. He hardly knew

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the Priscilla of this lively letter. His conscience, too, felt a little easier when he realized how much happiness they were getting out of their small inheritance. But he resolved, all the same, that instead of having himself twice as much as they had collectively, they should have collectively at least twice as much as he had individually. He counted that their having the house made it right perhaps for him to have personally a little more money. More and more poor Robert realized what a dull time they had all had, and more dispiriting still that, as far as he was concerned, it had been his own fault in submitting to it. With Priscilla's spirited letter before him, he fell to wondering what she would have done, had she found herself a spice clerk in Doane Street. He knew pretty well that she would have got out of it much sooner than he had done, and through her own efforts. It was a source of increasing mortification to Robert that up to thirty-four he had asked so little of life. Then he remembered Miss Frothingham and how thoroughly she would have disapproved of such abasement. Was he not in Paris, and free? — that was what *she* would have emphasized. Coming out of his meditations, he tore open Priscilla's second letter, still wondering how she came to write again so soon, when she had said so distinctly in her first letter that nothing would induce her to send him another letter until she had one from him. This is what he read : —

BOLTON, MASSACHUSETTS,  
December tenth.

DEAREST ROBERT : — I said I would n't write to you, not even a scrap of a letter, until I had a good long letter

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from you in return for that tremendous epistle I sent you about a month ago. I have n't had a line, not a picture postal even, and here I am, woman-like, doing just what I said I would n't do! But my news is far and away too good too keep. It is the biggest and the greatest and the best news I have ever had to tell. Can you guess what it is? I know you can, but I mean to tell you, all the same, just for the pleasure of setting it down in black and white. *I am going to be married* some day, and to your friend, Stephen Morse! Martha and Mattie are the only ones who know about it, for Stephen has just asked me this very day. I want you to be the first one outside to have this good news, both because you're a very nice boy, and because if it had n't been for you, there would n't have been any news! Martha and Mattie say it is a very sudden engagement, and they fear Mrs. Perkins will be very much shocked when she hears of it, for she kept Perkins waiting three years and seven months to the very day before she would ever promise to marry him. But really it is n't sudden at all. Stephen would have asked me *weeks* ago, if I had let him. I have had hard work heading him off when he got dangerously near the subject. But to-day I just could n't do it any longer. I felt I'd been a little forward that first day he was here, and I knew from the first what I would say when he did ask me. He almost proposed to me on that ride to Groton School. Just fancy, dear Robert, it was the very first time we'd ever seen each other. You are too much of an old bachelor to understand, but really time has n't anything to do with it. When I opened the door that Thursday afternoon, and saw Stephen standing there, I blushed so furiously because the thought came to me



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that perhaps this was the man I would marry. And Stephen felt just the same way about me. Before either of us had spoken a word, he said to himself, "By Jove, that's the girl I'm going to marry." Wasn't it quick of him? I don't see how girls can dally over such matters, do you? I should think they would know right off whether it was to be yes or no. When I finally let Stephen speak, I just put my arms around him and said yes almost before he had asked me, for I did n't want him to feel that my love was any less perfect and sure than his. I think it must be simply dreadful when there is any doubt or hesitation on either side. I just wanted our love to be without a single little flaw. If Stephen had really asked me that first drive we took, I should have said yes, and the girls might have made all the remarks they pleased. Dearest Robert, we are so happy! I know Stephen better than I know any one else in all the world, even better than Martha or Mattie. He has been out here every Sunday since he's been home from Europe, and generally two or three times during the week. But it isn't that. It's because our souls are really one, and I've known him always in my dreams. Stephen's mother and two sisters are coming out to call to-morrow afternoon, and I shall try to look my prettiest, for I do want them to love me, and to feel that Stephen is not making a mistake in wanting to marry me. That would be dreadful. When I mentioned it to Stephen, he said that such a thing was unthinkable, and that when they saw me, their only wonder would be that so prompt a person as himself had waited four whole weeks before popping the question. Stephen says very civil things to me. They are almost enough to turn my head. But they don't

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the least little bit in the world. It is such a wonderful and beautiful thing to be in love that I am really a changed girl. I shall not care so much about clothes, and I shall not be frivolous or have bad thoughts about poor aunt. Dear Robert, I wish that you were in love.

From your happy, happy cousin,

PRISCILLA.

Robert read this letter twice before he turned to Stephen's shorter note. He had been keeping this to the last, not only as the more methodical proceeding, but also, it must be confessed, in the same spirit that children nibble around the edges and keep the most delicious morsel for the very last. Stephen's note was characteristic: —

BOLTON, MASSACHUSETTS,

December tenth.

I am eternally grateful to you, little Pen, for sending me out to Bolton. It was a case of love at first sight. When Priscilla came to the door, I just yielded up my heart without so much as a struggle. It was just hers to command. I never knew anything to be so sudden. The dear girl was so demure and shy that I had an uphill fight. Good Lord, I don't know why she *should* care for me, but she does all right and no mistake. From the very first, though, I was n't discouraged. I had the feel all along that I should win, and now that I have won, I am as happy as they come. If anything could add to my happiness, dear little Pen, it will be the thought that when Priscilla and I are married, I too shall be cousin to the best man I know.

Yours always,

STEPHEN MORSE.

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P. S. It's ripping good fun being in love— heaps more than reading the "Lives of the Lord Chancellors" by your lonesome. Get busy, little Pen.

Perhaps this little note touched Robert more keenly than the longer letters had done. He was not deceived by it. He knew that Stephen was always prone to take too favorable a view of the late spice clerk and present wanderer. But whether he deserved it or not, the affection of this strong, self-reliant young lawyer was a constant tonic to Robert. As he read the note a second time, his eyes filled with tears, partly from joy in the happiness of Stephen and Priscilla, and partly from a vague pain in his own unsatisfied heart. The proposed marriage gave him hearty pleasure, for it seemed to him in every way beautiful and fitting. He chided himself that at such a moment he should think of anything else. But as he went down in the lift and slowly made his way along the Boulevard Haussman and the Avenue de Friedland, the pain grew more rather than less. It was the joyous certainty in all the letters, the entire absence of hesitation, that cut him to the quick. He felt himself a poor sort of fellow that he could not know such a triumphant love. It seemed to him magnificent that they should both have known at once. He would have expected it of Stephen. But Priscilla appeared in a wholly new light. He had thought of her merely as a lively school-girl, rebellious most of the time under the severe rule of their Aunt Matilda, and giving no particular promise of heroic or even unusual conduct. He felt a new tenderness for his cousin when, later, in his own room, he re-read the simple account of her prompt sur-

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render so that Stephen might not for a moment doubt the perfect completeness of their love. Robert would not have credited Priscilla with such insight and unselfishness. He would have expected her to play with Stephen, and keep him on the anxious bench for some days, or even weeks.

In the face of this certitude and dignity, he felt himself irresolute and almost contemptible. His own attitude towards Pauline filled him with shame. Pauline's superiority to his own poor self made it seem all the worse. Of late there had been an added cause of distress. Robert had never before admitted it to himself, but he had a growing suspicion, a growing fear, it might properly be called, that Pauline was beginning to care for him. The thought made him hate himself. To have Pauline care and to have nothing to offer her in return was quite the worst that could happen.

Robert considered the wisdom of leaving Paris, and going to Italy a few weeks earlier than he had planned. The increasingly cold weather would serve as a sufficient excuse. The announcement of *déjeuner* came as a distinct relief. Robert hastily freshened up and went downstairs. Fortunately, Miss Carpenter was at the table, and her sane, wholesome talk helped him to regain his poise. She saw that something was wrong with Robert, but she gave no sign. Instead of asking questions and inviting confidences, she gave him a somewhat detailed account of the work of the Ethical Culture Society in Paris and other social movements with which she was herself connected. She could scarcely have done better, for it was exactly what Robert needed, — to be taken out of himself.

But the routine of the day had been too rudely inter-

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rupted to be easily resumed. Robert spent the afternoon in his room, for the most part writing letters. He wrote fully and affectionately to both Priscilla and Stephen, heightening their own happiness by so manifestly sharing it. They were not remarkable letters, but for Robert they represented a small victory. They contained no shadow of his own distress, nothing but the genuine joy of a friend in the happiness of his friends, which perhaps shows that in spite of all his self-abasement, Robert was not wholly devoid of the heroic.

Robert did not go to Pauline at tea-drinking time. Happily it was not even necessary to send her word. It was understood that whenever he failed to appear by five, she would know that he was occupied and could not come. Robert went out and bought the three Baedekers for Italy, and resolutely bent his will to the study of possible plans. But it was to little purpose. From five to six especially he thought of little but Pauline, and always with the haunting fear that, unworthy as he was, she might be growing to care for him. Then he hated himself so fiercely and unreasonably that he marched up and down the room in a very fever of unrest. The Italian guide-books, in their bright red covers, seemed to call shame upon him; and when he tried to busy himself in their contents, each railway route and *hôtel-pension* seemed to emphasize the reason for his running away.

Robert hurried through dinner. Miss Carpenter was out, and there was no one to talk to except the young Brazilian beauty at the next table, who spoke French divinely, but who had nothing to say. Robert declined the solicitous cabman who usually served him in the evening. He felt the

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need of vigorous exercise. He strode down the Avenue and on through the maze of streets leading to the theatre at a speed which called forth several uncivil remarks on the part of more leisurely pedestrians. The play was a melodrama of the most improbable sort. Robert followed it with insistent interest, and all he dreaded were the interminable intervals between the acts.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE UNEXPECTED

FORTUNATELY for Robert, he had regained the habit of sound sleep. However tangled up he might get during the day, — and he had a considerable talent for getting tangled up, — a night's rest brought him back to some degree of serenity. It was so in the present instance. On the morning following the storm, Robert awoke with a sense of renewed well-being that made the distress of the preceding day seem uncalled for and out of place. The sense of loneliness remained, but he told himself that it was entirely fatuous to believe for one little moment that Pauline could care for so slight a person as himself. It began to look fantastic in the extreme that he should have so sorely chidden himself for the lack of a feeling for her, when such a feeling could have had but one outcome, — disappointment and sorrow for him. By the time Robert was dressed and ready for his coffee, he was able to fix his thoughts upon the usual plans for the day. His coffee always acted as a mild stimulant, and sent him upon his daily routine with a pleasant expectation of success. He threw himself into his several occupations with an energy that tried to make up for the losses of the day before. But when afternoon came, something of the old unrest came with it. Robert was greatly tempted not to go to Pauline's. He had never been absent two days in succession, however, except when he had some genuine excuse. Now he had excuse enough, but none that he could

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very well offer to Pauline. He told himself rather irritably that nevertheless he would not go, but somewhere in his subconscious self he knew all along that he would go.

As a matter of fact, the only outward sign of rebellion was that the clock pointed some minutes after five when Robert arrived at the Castiglioni. Pauline was not in the *salon*. Robert was rather glad of this, for it seemed to say at least that she had not been waiting for him. In a few moments Pauline came in. She greeted Robert as she always did, — with frank friendliness. Her manner was too cordial to be cold, and too impersonal to be warm. When Robert saw Pauline every day, he was less conscious of her individual quality. But even one day's absence made him conscious anew of this baffling something which kept Pauline detached from every one, even in a way from Billy and her father. With his own heightened sensitiveness, Robert was more conscious of this quality than he had been since the first evening at the Castiglioni when they had dined together. It made him think of Donald's description, — a natural history girl, — and it irritated him in spite of the fact that it should have set his own fears wholly at rest. But this feeling soon wore off as he fell into the swing of the talk and the lesson got under way.

Pauline made no reference to his absence the day before. As far as Robert could see, she had not so much as noticed it. But this signified nothing, as he quite well knew, for with Pauline's ideas of freedom and bigness, she was not the girl to chide any one for staying away, or to make them feel, in however slight a degree, that she had any claim upon them that would make explanations



in order. So Robert offered no explanations. Apparently, everything was just as it had been before.

And yet, as the lesson wore on, Robert was conscious of two things. One was that Pauline, in spite of her beautiful poise, was laboring under some suppressed excitement that made her seem even more alive and energetic than usual. Her color was high, and her eyes sparkled with added fire. And the second thing that Robert was very conscious of was that the lesson was being given with a thoroughness and intensity that fairly took his breath away. He almost forgot that as pupil he also had a part to play, so taken up was he with the dramatic passion of Pauline's instruction. He grew a little tired in spite of himself, and experienced a sense of relief when the tea things were brought in and the lesson came to an end. Mr. Marshall did not join them, and Pauline explained that he was occupied. She had herself dropped into English, the fire of the teacher extinguished or banked, and the talk fell into the ordinary social channels.

Robert drank two cups of tea, — it was particularly good that afternoon, — and munched his biscuit with evident satisfaction. He had meant to leave early; in fact, just as early as he decently could. But his resolution had evaporated. It was always a pleasure to drink tea with Pauline, and particularly when Mr. Marshall was absent. Robert could not have said exactly in what the charm consisted, but he never questioned its reality. It may have been the very quality which earlier in the afternoon had irritated him, that is, Pauline's objectivity, her natural history quality. Donald had said that she was devoid of womanliness, but as far as Robert could make out, this

merely meant that she was devoid of coquetry. She made no appeal for one's attention ; she asked only for comradeship, and even for that only in case you quite wanted to give it. She was not unappreciative, but she seemed to say in her whole attitude towards life that if need be she could get on quite as well without you. Donald, and in fact Stephen also, regarded this as a grave defect in a woman. She must not be too helpless, that is to say, not helpless enough to be troublesome, but at least helpless enough to make a man pleasantly necessary. Pauline had no trace of this graceful dependence. She would have scorned it in herself and for her sex in general. It was inconsistent, but this very remoteness which so often irritated Robert was also a constant source of attraction. His own nature was so sensitive and so easily shaken that he had a boundless admiration for such poise as Pauline's. He could not help comparing it with his own stormy yesterday, and the comparison was immensely in favor of Pauline.

On the whole, Robert was glad that he had dropped in. Clearly they were just good comrades. It was raw and cold outside. The electric glare on the Rue de Castiglioni made slight amends for the fog and gloom above it. The sizzling arc lamps beat back the dull mantle only a few feet at best, and even then seemed to make it more compact and depressing in the process. The warmth and comfort of the Marshalls' *salon* appealed to Robert. He knew perfectly well that it was the presence of Pauline that made the atmosphere of the place. The lights were right ; the tea-table was what it ought to be ; Pauline's gowns were always a success. She herself had wrought the combined magic of the room, and evidently cared to work just

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such magic wherever she went, but she gave Robert the sense of personally rising above it and not taking it too seriously. She was quite capable of sweeping it all aside, without so much as a quiver, had it interrupted her own freedom of spirit. All this gave the *salon* the air of ministering to the moment, but never possessing it. Robert did not analyze these elements of the situation. He was conscious only of the charm of the general result. Under the spell of it, he not only remained later than he expected to, but even later than he had ever done before. When, at last, he arose to go, Pauline surprised him by rising also.

She held out her hand, and as Robert took it and murmured his good-night, Pauline said in an even, steady voice, "I am sorry, Mr. Pendexter, but it must also be good-by. We start for America to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" repeated Robert, in a dazed way. "You start for America to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Pauline.

"I thought you stopped here all winter, and went to Switzerland in the spring."

"We did expect to," answered Pauline; "but now everything is changed. We are going home!"

There was such a ringing note of triumph in Pauline's word "home" that Robert looked at her quickly, and before he could substitute something more polite, he blurted out, "And what takes you home?"

"Trouble," said Pauline, in the same cheerful tone.

"Not *real* trouble, I hope."

"Yes," said Pauline, "*real* trouble, — at least for my father. It's not trouble for me. It's good news, pure and

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simple. After so much of Europe, I prefer Indianapolis to Paris."

"But your father does n't."

"No, he does n't," admitted Pauline. "He prefers any corner of the foreign world to any corner of America."

"Then *why* is he going home?"

"He is obliged to go," said Pauline, quietly. "You know he is president of a company there. It failed day before yesterday. It may be that we have lost everything."

"Oh, I hope not," said Robert. "I hope it may not be so bad as that!"

Pauline laughed pleasantly. "Thank you for your good wishes. But you ought to give those to my father, and then congratulate *me*. I'm delighted that anything has called us home. My only fear is that we haven't lost enough to keep us there! This is a wretched way to live, — Billy at a foreign school, growing up without knowing what it is to be an American; my father trotting aimlessly about Europe, ill most of the time simply because he's bored to death; and I, as you know, eating my very heart out because I've nothing useful to do and no place in the world where I'm really needed. I hope there's not a penny left. My father is still a young man. It would be vastly better for him to have something to do. Billy could go to the public school at home, and learn to be an American, if he did n't learn anything else. I am strong enough to work for both of them, if need be, — and oh, I should be so happy!"

Pauline's face was aglow with enthusiasm. Robert watched her in mingled surprise and admiration. He wondered how he would feel if he had lost everything. He

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could hardly imagine that he would be happy over it. Perhaps his income was too recent a convenience to be given up without a murmur.

Robert knew that he ought to go. It was already quite time for Pauline to dress for dinner, and he himself would be late at the Pension Carpenter. But as the news entered his consciousness in all its significance, he found it less and less possible to leave. Instead, he walked up and down the *salon* with his hands in his pockets. Pauline had re-seated herself at the tea-table and was quietly watching him. A vision of what Paris would be with Pauline taken out of it swept over him like an enveloping gray fog. He had thought lightly enough of leaving Paris himself, while the Marshalls were still there, but to have them go and leave him behind was quite a different matter. Then he thought with a great rush of feeling what a supreme moment this would be to offer Pauline his love, and how eagerly he would have jumped at such a chance only a few weeks before. He was tempted to put all his doubts and hesitation aside, and to risk everything in a spoken avowal. But the words would not come. He was conscious that Pauline must think him acting strangely, that he must stop this nervous pacing up and down the room, and say something, however casual. He forced himself to stop near the table. Pauline looked up. Robert asked lamely, "Shall you take Billy with you?"

It may be that Pauline felt the irrelevancy of the question. She laughed a little uncertainly as she answered, "Oh, yes, that's the first bright spot in our so-called troubles. We go to England to-morrow, and pick up Billy on the way to Liverpool. When I had him every day, I

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did n't much care, but since he's been at school, I've been fairly homesick for him."

Both Pauline and Robert felt that a small crisis had been successfully passed, and whether they might feel glad or sorry for it afterwards, there was a momentary sense of relief. Robert sat down in a chair opposite Pauline, and asked with genuine interest, "When do you sail for America?"

"On Saturday, on the *Coronia*; that is, if we can get rooms. Cook has wired to the London office for us. We ought to have word to-night."

Robert drew a long breath. "To think of starting for America on Saturday!" he said. "It makes me envious. I wish I were going with you."

"I wish you were," responded Pauline, quickly; and then she added with considerable earnestness, "No, I don't, either. It has been good for you to be in Europe, and you have n't taken the full course. You ought to stay the year out. Don't go home until next September."

"Perhaps," said Robert, with rather tepid interest; and then he added, less selfishly, "But you must have a lot of things to do. Can't I help you? Can't I attend to something for you?"

"Thank you, no. We are almost packed. We have had two days, and if you set about it, you can do a lot in two days. My one difficulty is my father. He's horribly upset over the whole affair, and dreads everything."

"Could I help you with him?" asked Robert.

"No. There is nothing to be done but to go home and face the situation. It might be so much worse. There is no dishonor, or wrong-doing, or anything of that sort to

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worry about. In the end, the company will be able to pay all its debts. The only thing is that we shall have much less money, perhaps none at all, when everything is settled up. If I could only make my father see that the trouble is n't serious, and need not affect our happiness in the least! For myself, as you know, I am almost foolishly glad over it. I cannot even feel as sorry as I ought for my father. But in the end it will be better for him, too. Just now he is quite unmanned. It is not the disaster,—it is the aimless life he has been leading for the past three years. It has paralyzed his will. He used to be a man of force and purpose. It will all come back to him when we get to America and he is obliged to bestir himself. Don't feel sorry for us, Mr. Pendexter. We are not in a bad way. We've been off the right track for at least two out of the last three years, and now we're simply going to get on it again! I can hardly wait to get home." Pauline had risen, and once more held out her hand. "I know you will pardon me, but I really must go to my father now."

Robert caught her hand eagerly. "I've been a pig to stay so long. But I cannot let you drop out of my life so suddenly. Can't I go to Liverpool with you and help you off?"

"No," said Pauline, withdrawing her hand gently. "I could n't think of such a thing."

"I could go just as well as not. My few engagements are easily canceled."

"It is not that, but my father would be nervous. It is better for him not to see people, at present. Just now, he is overwhelmed with mortification."

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"But I may see you to-morrow morning, may I not?" begged Robert.

"Certainly, if you wish. But not here — at the Gare du Nord. The train leaves at nine fifty. Come at half-past nine. I know we shall be there by that time, for my father will begin to fidget about getting off as soon as it's light."

"All right. At the Gare du Nord. The express for London. I wish you'd let me go as far as Boulogne."

"No, you simply mustn't. It would upset my father dreadfully. Good-night!"

Robert unwillingly went away, chagrined that at such a difficult moment in Pauline's life, he could be of practically no service to her.

It was already past seven. Pauline had not asked him to stay to dinner. He wished that she had, but he knew, of course, that her father's condition made it impossible. It was too late to get home and dress for the formal dinner at the Pension Carpenter, so Robert turned into a small café on the Rue de la Paix, and sat down at one of the little tables. It was a cheery enough place. The lights were all ablaze; there were growing plants about the room, and the walls were varying shades of brilliant red. But Robert was quite unconscious of the cheer. He was nervous and excited, and the intolerable sense of loneliness that had almost swallowed him up yesterday now seemed to engulf him completely. He declined the allurements of the table d'hôte, although the waiter told him confidentially that it was only three francs, good red wine included. Spurred on by the necessity of ordering something, he let his eye wander aimlessly over the bill of fare. All the dishes



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seemed equally impossible. Robert did not quite see how the food could get around the lump in his throat. He was sorry that he had come in. Finally he ordered a cup of strong coffee and a roll. An hour later, he noticed that the cup was empty and the roll gone, so he fancied that he must have made way with them, but he had no recollection of having done so. The café was partly deserted, and the proprietor was looking at him in no friendly way as an eccentric who occupied too much space and spent too little money. Robert paid his bill, and rushed out into the night. It was still raw and cold, but he was unmindful of the weather. He had a vague idea of walking home, and perhaps beyond, into the deserted Bois. As the effect of the hot coffee wore off, Robert began to feel the chill. He called a cab and drove home. He was glad to get indoors and in front of the grate fire in his own room.

Robert did not turn on the light. He was in no mood for reading. He threw himself into an armchair and sat there huddled up in front of the fire, alternately hot and cold, fighting the old circular fight of the undecided. For a time the warmth and comfort of the Marshalls' *salon* filled his thoughts. He re-lived all the events of the afternoon, even the strenuous French lesson, but he lingered longest over the cheer of the dainty tea-table, with Pauline sitting on one side of it, so manifestly mistress of the whole situation, and himself cosily established on the other side, content and happy. How could a man ask more, and especially how could he, Robert Pendexter, who had so little to offer in exchange? He had no right to think that Pauline could be in love with him, but however unreasonable the thought, an unmistakable intuition told him that

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at least Pauline cared a little, and that it rested with him to make her care more. He might try to deceive himself if he wished, but in his heart he knew that at that critical moment when he had put the inane question about Billy, he might, had he so willed, have bound Pauline's destiny to his own, and have had done forever with the terrible gnawing loneliness that, under all the gay exterior of his life, was eating out his very heart. He might have gone back to America with Pauline as her accepted lover, perhaps even as her husband, for she might possibly have consented to marry him in London. As Robert thought of all this, and let these comfortable pictures of an assured comradeship pass before him, it seemed incredible that he should have wavered and turned weakly away. So admirable a fate was much too good for him. He deserved to lose Pauline, to be lonely all the rest of his life. He wondered what Pauline thought. She was too clever not to have divined the conflict that was going on so visibly before her very eyes. Perhaps she had already suffered a complete revulsion of feeling, and now despised him as heartily as he deserved. Robert shuddered. He could not bear to have Pauline despise him, — Pauline, so strong, so brave, so magnificent. It seemed to Robert that he could not live if Pauline despised him, that he must wither up and die. Perhaps it was not yet too late. The right moment had gone by, but perhaps there might be a second right moment. He would go to her at once. Robert roused himself and pulled out his watch. He held it near the fire. It was almost midnight, and it was too late, — Pauline would be in bed and asleep.

Robert had never thought of Pauline in terms of sen-

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sual desire. The momentary breath of passion when, at Gorphwysfa, he had wanted to kiss her hand, and again in the garden at Bowness, had so abashed his almost maiden soul that since then his feeling, whatever it was, had been as innocent as a boy's. Pauline had appealed to him on the artistic side of his nature. Her strength, her superb good looks, her physical prowess and energy, her ability to create the magic of warmth and comfort wherever she found herself, above all, the unbroken fitness of whatever she said and did and wore, had separated her from the few women he had known in America, and classed her with the beautiful objects of nature, with mountains and lakes, the seven seas, and all the big, flawless things. But to-night there came a new feeling that carried Robert into an unexplored world. It seemed to bring the warmth of Pauline's presence with it, and to diffuse a strange tenderness over the whole of life. The picture of Pauline asleep stirred new depths in his being. Such a feeling had never come to him before, and had it come, Robert would have put it resolutely aside as too great a liberty. But to-night the curse of self-consciousness had for the moment spent itself, and Robert was again one with nature and with life. There was no mystery so sacred that he might not share it, no temple so holy that he might not enter. Unabashed, he stood in thought by Pauline asleep. He took her in his arms and pressed her to his heart. He felt the delicious warmth of her strong young body; he breathed the fragrance of her hair. He stood there by a double right, for he had come to comfort her, as well as to be comforted.

A live coal fell with a jarring noise upon the hearth.

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Robert got up to replace it on the fire. It fell apart under the too strong pressure of the tongs, and the fragments paled into gray ash.

Robert resumed his chair, but the spell had been broken. For the moment, he had been sure of himself, but now doubt had once more entered. Robert determined, however, to act as if he were still sure. These eternal doubts were after all a mere feebleness of the will. He would go to the Gare du Nord very early in the morning, so as to be on hand when the Marshalls arrived. He would see Mr. Marshall safely established in his compartment and all the tiresome luggage stowed away. Then Pauline and he would walk up and down the platform together. They would have at least twenty minutes, perhaps half an hour. It would not be so ideal a spot as the *petit salon* on the upper floor of the Castiglioni, but he would not play the fool again. Come what would, he would —

“Would he?” cried a mocking inner voice, the voice of an apparent second self.

Robert flung himself out of his chair. “Yes,” he cried aloud. “By all that’s good, I swear I —” But again he was arrested before his oath found record. It was not this time by the mocking inner voice, but by a swift vision. He stood inside a great Minster in an ecstasy of spiritual awakening. The organ sent out vast waves of pulsating, throbbing sound. The clear, high voices of the choir filled the void spaces of the great Minster with haunting beauty. The light filtered through the stained glass windows and illumined the fluted columns of the nave. Stephen and Donald were there. Sappho and Miss Frothingham were moving towards them. Robert himself was

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nowhere, because by a divine transfiguration he had entered for the moment into the spirit of the whole. He *was* the light, the tracery, the song. But always Pauline stood without the door. Once more he realized with a sobbing heart-ache that in this world of the spirit she could not enter. He did not himself always live in it. There were moments when the beautiful body of the world and the fire of its heart sufficed him, and with its abundant warmth and comfort he was content. It was at such moments that Pauline held out her arms to him, — Pauline, who represented at their best this body and this heart. But his real home was in the world of the spirit, in that world which had been revealed to him in the wonderful moment at York Minster, — a world which he had not yet explored, but one that was always calling him, — a call that was the heart of all his loneliness and discontent.

It was long past midnight when Robert went to bed. He was emotionally spent, and slept the sleep of a great weariness.

Shortly after the wintry daylight came straggling into his room, Robert aroused himself and dressed. Just what he would say to Pauline, he hardly knew, but he meant that it should be nothing more than an ordinary friendly parting. By the time he reached the Gare du Nord, it was only quarter past nine. The Marshalls were not there. Robert paced up and down the first-class waiting-room, fearful one moment that he might miss them, and anxious the next lest when they did come he should not say and do the right thing. It was half-past nine, and still the Marshalls did not appear. By quarter of ten, Robert was genuinely uneasy on their own account, thinking that perhaps

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Mr. Marshall was too ill to travel. At ten minutes of ten the train moved off. Robert noticed that the guard called Calais-Dover, and he remembered, he thought, that Pauline had said they were going by Boulogne.

Robert took a cab and drove hastily to the Castiglioni, only to find that the Marshalls had gone. The porter remembered that they had left early, earlier he thought than they expected to, and they had certainly directed the cab to proceed to the Gare du Nord, for he himself had told the cabman.

More perplexed than ever, Robert returned to the Pension Carpenter. He remained in his room all morning. When he went down to luncheon, he found a note at his place. It was from Pauline, and had evidently been brought by a private messenger. She wrote in great haste to say that she had stupidly got the London trains mixed up, and that the Boulogne train left at eight twenty-five instead of at nine fifty. She was too sorry to have put him to any inconvenience. Her father joined her in friendly good-bys and best wishes.

Robert puzzled over the note all the afternoon. It was like Pauline to drag her father in, and by making the note so impersonal, keep it from saying anything. The mistake about the trains was genuine, he was sure of that, for Pauline was quite too honest to descend to any fibbing. But the question that bothered Robert was as to when she had found out the mistake, and whether, had she so wished, she might not have got him word in time. He was quite at sea. It might be that Pauline discovered her mistake at the last moment and really could not let him know sooner; or it might be that she had taken advantage of the mistake to

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avoid seeing him again. The note itself was entirely non-committal. If she *had* avoided him, she had done it honestly, she had a perfect right to do it, and he did not blame her the least little bit in the world. But it would have been a great comfort to know that she had n't.

In the days that followed, Robert found that Paris without Pauline seemed suddenly very empty.

## CHAPTER XVI

### COCUMELLA

IT was early in March when Robert reached Cocumella. He had imagined that Italy was a warm country, and had gone to San Remo, thinking to be very comfortable, and to wait there for the spring and a propitious season for visiting the interior hill towns. But February had been unusually severe, and every few days he had moved farther south, expecting to catch up with the heat. He came to feel as if he were being pursued by the demon of cold. At Rome he had spent a whole morning hunting an apartment with full southern exposure, only to discover that the Italian sun in winter is not a very dependable heater, and that the apology for a stove in his grand apartment could not keep him from shivering. When he complained, they told him quite seriously that if he really wanted to keep warm, he ought to go to Russia, for there they were prepared for the cold. But Robert had no desire to go to Russia, and so continued to move south. He had a humorous feeling that he might eventually land in Sicily, or even in Africa, and he wondered how poor Donald was making it in Berlin. It was quite without expectation of finding a permanent abiding-place that Robert turned towards Sorrento. He liked the name, and he recalled that Sappho and Miss Frothingham might possibly be there in March. He had grown accustomed to being lonely, and was bearing himself better than in Paris, but nevertheless, the prospect of having such pleasant company was a great attraction.



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It was, after all, a mere possibility that he might run across the two ladies, so he did not allow himself to count upon it.

Tucked away as it is, near the end of its own peninsula, Sorrento seems at first sight almost as inaccessible as paradise, but like paradise, it is easy enough to get there when you once know the road. On the great half-moon of the Bay of Naples, the two cities face each other, the excitable Naples near the horn of the northern half and the serene Sorrento near the horn of the southern half. Every morning during the season, the white-painted, broad-bellied, double smoke-stacked Nixe leaves her Neapolitan mooring and its perennial excitement, to make a clear thirteen-mile line across the waters to the quiet beauty of Sorrento. The foam in her wake traces a long white line across the blue waters. Like a giant swan, she descends upon the headlands; and the little boats, in answer to her whistling call, crowd around her like so many water-beetles around a majestic waterfowl. For a moment she comes to rest, and one by one the little boats snuggle up to her to give or take their cargoes of present day money-makers, — American, English, or German. Another whistle and the Nixe skirts the headlands of the Capo di Sorrento, and heads off across the lovely waters to the enchanted island of Capri. This is in the early part of the day, a little past ten. Shortly after five the Nixe returns from Capri with more Americans, English, and Germans, and after a friendly salute in the way of a deep bass whistle, is off once more to the human fever of Naples.

Robert's experience on the Republic had given him a fondness for boats, large and small. He meant to take the

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Nixe over to Sorrento, and early on the morning following his arrival in Naples, he drove down to the landing-place. When he looked across the waters, however, and saw the enchanting country that surrounds the Bay, he changed his mind, and hastily drove to the railway station. He got there just in time to catch the early train to Castellamare. It is about an hour's run. The railway skirts the beautiful Bay, and makes its path through the Vesuvian ash-piles and lava streams to the foot of a gray, forbidding wall of rock, the Monte Sant' Angelo. Here lies Castellamare, still ten miles from Sorrento. They say in Naples that Castellamare is the dirtiest city in Italy, but in other quarters of the world it is also said that pot mustn't call kettle black. Robert was quite undismayed, — why bother with the foreground when the background is so superb? — also, he was not going to stop in Castellamare.

At the railway station there is a particularly officious and offensive person, a self-appointed factotum. He speaks English, but his vocabulary is very limited, and when he gets to the end he cheerfully begins over again, and then a second time, and so on, indefinitely. This jargon of familiar words without ideas produces a certain vertigo, and Robert handed over his luggage, his small coin, and himself without the least show of resistance. But his journey to Sorrento was in no way furthered. The function of the factotum is pure obstruction. He distributed Robert's luggage to as many *facchini* as possible, and created confusion in the minds of the cab-drivers. In any other country, Robert the practical would have been angry. But in Italy, it was Robert the dreamer. In the face of such all-pervading beauty, the little details of life seemed quite

unimportant. Robert had learned a little Italian, enough to travel by, and with its help and still more patience he finally gathered his traps together again. After exciting interviews with what seemed to him about half the population of the place, he succeeded in hiring a crazy-looking cab to take him and his possessions out to Sorrento. Even then the driver stopped a number of times and addressed a torrent of remarks to Robert, but whether these had to do with the scenery, or local history, or the inadequacy of cab fares, Robert's knowledge of Italian was too limited to enable him even to guess.

The drive was ten miles of delight. Even Robert's glimpse of the Riviera had not prepared him for such color and such beauty. They seemed to him almost like companions, brooding presences that made it impossible to be lonely.

On one side of the drive, to his left, he had the jagged limestone cliffs flanking the Monte Sant' Angelo, with scant herbage of heather and broom, and cruel-looking boulders apparently waiting to crush just such pigmies as himself. On the other side there was a wall, gray and lichen-covered; over the wall, a precipice, showing on occasional terraces a few stray olive trees, or the glossy dark green of the caruba tree; at the foot of the precipice, advancing and retreating, were the multi-colored waters of the ever-beautiful Bay of Naples. Far out, the waters show that marvelous even blue for which they are celebrated the world over, but it is along the shore line that one sees the greatest beauty. Here, it is not salt water that one sees, but the open pigment-case of some gay-hearted painter bent on making an impossible aquarelle. The blues

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do not fade into one another. They are in distinct patches, here a mass of exquisite turquoise against a setting of royal sapphire, there a long streamer of blue, caught from the very sky itself, and trailing over turquoise and sapphire as if the owner of the pigment-case had wantonly smeared a film of china white over his cobalts and Prussian blues. The color is a very real thing, and apparently no trick of reflection, no mere reaction in the soul of the beholder.

In spite of himself, Robert searched the masses of gray limestone with bewildered eyes to see if they also, where the waters had swept over them, were not besmeared with blue.

And all the while the blue-stained waters mockingly advance and retreat, fraying themselves into white foam, and bearing their patches as jauntily as a Neapolitan beggar his rags.

At Vico Equense the road twists itself back from the sea into a graceful horseshoe, crossing the little valley that made this *détour* necessary on a high stone bridge many-arched and beautiful. Robert had the carriage stop. Down the valley he saw on each side steep, terraced gardens, planted in the gray green of the olive, and here and there in the warmer green of orange and lemon tree, partly covered by straw mats to keep off the sometime invading frost. Between this setting of green he caught glimpses of the water and the straight, restful line of the opposite coast. From the midst of the orchards rose the pink and the white houses, either singly or in picturesque groups, and higher than all, the tower of a church giving a touch of the distant East in its minaret-like roof covered with tiles of green and yellow. Up the valley, Robert saw steep

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billows of silvery green, the orchards of thickly planted olive, with only an occasional country-house, and ending in a wild tangle of gray mountains, whitened here and there with snow.

With a sigh of regret, Robert had the carriage drive on. After that the road dashed through the picturesque village of Marina di Equa, and Robert found himself high above the water in the midst of prosperous olive orchards. If you are sensitive to such things, it is a distinct pleasure to look down into the blue depths through the delicate silver-green of the olive. It is not an unusual experience in Italy, but it never came to Robert without an answering thrill.

When the road emerges from the olives, it comes out on a bold promontory, and one catches a first glimpse of the Piano di Sorrento, so wonderful in its beauty that it seems a veritable Garden of Eden. The Piano is a generous sheet of lava, extending for three or four miles along the shore, and perhaps a mile wide. On three sides it is bounded by a wall of gray mountains, and on the fourth by the "loud-sounding," tideless sea. The Piano breaks off at the shore into wild, perpendicular cliffs, a hundred feet in height, sometimes rising in warm reddish walls directly from the waves, sometimes allowing a narrow stretch of dark gray beach, where bare-legged fishermen pull in their nets, and the tax-gatherer takes his tare. From the cliff edge, the Piano slopes gently upwards towards the encircling mountains. The whole plain is a brilliant green, interrupted by small patches of white and of pink. The green is the glossy leafage of orange and lemon trees, which show, when one comes nearer, abundant golden

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globes and pale yellow waxy pendants. Here and there, as if placed by some artist of consummate skill, rise the mighty stone pines, the glory of Italian landscape, their clean red trunks towering straight and proud above the humbler fruit-bearers, and spreading out on high into a gorgeous umbrella, with ribs of warm red and cover of never-fading velvet-green. The whites and pinks are the houses of Meta and Sant' Agnello and Sorrento.

It is about a mile of gradual descent to the level of the Piano. The splendid roadway is partly cut in the rock itself, and partly supported on massive walls and arches.

Once down on the Piano, and the road crosses it about midway. It is now engulfed between high garden walls, or runs through the damp, narrow streets of the almost continuous villages. These tortuous labyrinths lack the glory of the open, intoxicating roads, but they have a beauty all their own. The garden walls on each side are built of square blocks of lava, the warm reddish tone shining through the deeper browns like the red blood in the brown faces of the children playing near them. It seemed to Robert almost as if this red-washed stone still held the smouldering fires of bygone eruptions. But the destructive humor is past, and the present mood is wholly beneficent. The lava changes into the most fertile of soils, and nourishes where it once made havoc. The blocks in these old walls have crumbled on their edges, and in this hospitable soil dainty ferns and wild flowers have now taken up their abode, and trace out the squares in lines of living green. On top, where sun and rain and air have had still better chance, the lava has crumbled into deeper

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earth and bears a tender fringe of maiden-hair, casting its own shadows of velvet moss.

Stretching over the walls, as if bent upon a little private munificence, the orange and the lemon trees fling out branches of rich, glossy green, studded with golden and with yellow fruit. Still farther overhead there is a ribbon of blue sky. One cannot see much of it, but for this niggardliness it amply atones by its superb quality.

Robert drew a deep breath of satisfaction. But it seemed wicked to be going even at his present modest speed. To crawl along, and every few yards to stand quite still, would have seemed more reverent.

The road makes unexpected turns and angles, and is occasionally intersected by narrower lanes, where patient donkeys trot along under their top-heavy burdens, and the girls and women, straight as arrows, fetch firewood or provender on their well-poised heads. From time to time there is a wayside shrine, speaking to the heart of an ideal world even fairer than this fair Piano. Sometimes on top of the wall are perched little summer-houses with single or double arch turned towards the road, and from this point of vantage showing their graceful vaulted ceilings like so many interesting studies in perspective. And sometimes, if one look sharply enough, one will catch a pair of laughing brown eyes, — watching for some one else.

Long stretches of the road are silent and seemingly deserted, but however full one's heart, it will not do to burst into song, unless one is pretty sure of one's notes, for there are ears as well as eyes alert. Up in the trees a barefooted, sweet-faced boy is cutting, twining, pruning, while leaning against the wall, too quiet to be noticed, is a charming little

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peasant girl, wondering, perhaps, why it is that the Americans and English and Germans all have so much more money than the Italians.

Robert, too, was wondering. But he found part of the answer to his query at the next corner in the shabby little building that stands there as a symbol of misgovernment. It contains a pair of scales, a lantern, a shabby account-book, and two able-bodied men, who would much better be doing something else. It is the home of the tax-gatherer. Every bit of food brought down from the hillside, every fisher's net pulled out of the sea, every donkey panier of goods creeping along these lovely roads must pay its tax. And these beautiful gardens, walled in with such apparent penuriousness, must needs harbor every resource, for the tax-gatherer comes around once every two months, — six times a year! And the handsome signore, to whom one's own modest income seems a veritable fortune, must needs pay twenty per cent of his income — one fifth! — to a government which hardly seems to offer him a fair equivalent. It is true that the handsome signore does not tell the truth about his income, but one must not blame him too severely. Here in this beautiful Italy each man who works must carry on his back another man who only eats. It is the manner of the state militant.

Robert had not decided upon a hotel. He meant to leave the question open. It was early in the day, — he would be guided by appearances.

For some reason best known to himself, the cabman left the main highway at Sant' Agnello, and turned down towards the sea. Robert wanted to stop at each open gate, and explore the old gardens of which they gave such



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charming glimpses. He passed with difficulty the tortuous, inviting lane that leads down to Marion Crawford's villa. It was in this mood of high appreciation that Robert came upon Cocumella. It was a few minutes past twelve. A bright warm sun shone upon the severe façade of the Albergo, upon the delightful old orange orchard to the right, upon the little Jesuit church to the left, upon the palm trees in the stone courtyard in front. Towering high above the garden, several stone pines spread the illuminated velvet green of their heavy tops against a background of blue sky. Across the trees and waters rose the strong, beautiful outline of Vesuvius, with its dazzling, sun-smitten canopy of smoke. It was still almost a mile to Sorrento, to the Piazza, but Robert knew that this was the spot for him. Whatever Sorrento had to offer, it could not surpass in loveliness this ancient, garden-begirt Albergo.

It was with some difficulty that Robert persuaded his incomprehensible cabman to stop and deposit himself and his luggage. For some quite unknown reason, the man was bent upon making Sorrento. Robert declined to be carried on, however, and made such an outcry that Vincenzo, the head waiter, heard the disturbance, and rushed out to take part in it. When he learned that the gentleman had wished to stop at Cocumella, and had almost been prevented, the uproar that ensued was so vigorous and picturesque that by comparison Robert's protest seemed as nothing. He quite expected to see broken heads and other aftermath of violence, but the storm was made up wholly of words, and above all of gesticulations. Robert became fairly fascinated to see how near a clenched fist could come to another man's face without actually

striking it. By this time all the other cabmen waiting in front of the Albergo were taking part in the uproar. Though no one listened, each man seemed bent on expressing his own opinion fully and explicitly. Finally, Robert managed to get out of the cab and have his luggage transferred to the hall.

Vincenzo was once more the smiling host, eager to show the gentleman every unoccupied room in the Albergo, so that the gentleman might be fully satisfied. Robert selected a room at the top of the house, not a large one, but one that offered a cheery fireplace in one corner, and a group of windows looking out on the garden and the Bay and Vesuvius.

It was already time for luncheon. After a hasty freshening up, Robert ran downstairs to the gayly decorated dining-room on the ground floor. Vincenzo was watching for him, and steered him to a seat near the lower end of the long table. The people around him looked up and spoke pleasantly. Americans and Germans predominated, but it seemed to Robert that nearly every known country was represented. It was rather a noisy table. The sun streamed in through the large south windows and seemed to liberate the talk. Robert looked in vain for a familiar face. He hardly expected to find Sappho and Miss Frothingham, for he did not know how early in March they expected to reach Sorrento, or at what hotel they planned to stop. There were several small tables ranged along the sides of the room. Robert fancied that had the ladies been there, they would have chosen one of the small tables. It occurred to him that it would be very cosy if he might occupy the third place in such a little group.

After luncheon, Vincenzo took Robert through the garden, and begged him to help himself to the oranges and lemons. He also explained, as a fact quite worthy of attention, that the only reason why they could offer so much for six francs a day — the gentleman could see for himself after such a luncheon that it was vastly more than any one else gave for perhaps twice the money — was that the Gargulio family owned the estates themselves and did not have to pay any rent, and the saints knew that they were not mean, these Gargulios. They wanted every one to be quite satisfied, and did the gentleman not think that to give people a lot for their money was the best way to bring about such a result? It was regrettable, but some people did not appreciate it. Some did, however, and showed their appreciation by giving liberally to holy church, and to the local charities, of which by a happy chance Vincenzo had a complete list in his pocket. Perhaps the gentleman would like to look it over. The Russian princess — the gentleman might have remarked her sitting at the small table in the dining-room, — yes, the one to the extreme right — had given twenty francs. She was almost as rich as an American. To be sure, some could not afford to give so much as that. They gave only five francs, or if the truth must be told, sometimes only two or three. The mean ones gave only one franc, but happily not many such came to Cocumella. Robert was too full of the garden to pay much attention to Vincenzo. Rather absent-mindedly, Robert handed over a five-franc piece, and heard profuse thanks. When he turned around, a moment later, Vincenzo was nowhere to be seen.

Robert had never before had the freedom of an orange

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orchard. It was too soon after the abundant luncheon for him to want any of the fruit, but the bare fact that he was at liberty to help himself gave him an absurd amount of pleasure. It seemed to make the garden his very own. He wandered down the path to the abrupt cliff overlooking the bay. At the very edge of the garden he could peer over and see the tiny gray beach below. The whole outlook was so essentially picturesque, and so unlike anything he had ever seen before, that his interest amounted to an excitement. He could see a fisherman drawing up his boat up the sand, and further along a couple of workmen, an old man and a rosy boy, who seemed to be building something, perhaps a boat. Robert was all aglow to join them and explore this curious strip of beach cut off at both ends by bold, projecting headlands. On one side of the garden he found a little gate that opened into a narrow lane. This in turn took him into a bizarre path that made its zigzag way down the sheer face of the cliff. Sometimes the path was an uneven slope, sometimes a crude stairway cut in the lava, and worn by time and use into an indefinite outline. In places the path turned directly into the lava, and wandered through fantastic caverns doubtless excavated by ancient quarrymen, but now suggestive of bandits and smugglers. At other places the path emerged upon tile-paved balconies that offered outlooks of such rare beauty that it seemed a sin to leave them. Robert was slow in making the descent, for at every turn he was willingly detained. At last he came out upon the sands. A rough quay built of uneven blocks of lava, and protected by a tiny breakwater, offered a landing for small boats. Just now, it was deserted, for the Nixe would not be re-

turning from Capri for several hours yet. The fisherman had joined the boat-builders, and sat watching their progress. Their workshop was a rough grotto cut out of the lava and opening directly upon the sands. The boat was about half finished. To Robert, it represented a prodigious amount of labor. Not only were the old man and his beautiful apprentice shaping everything by hand with the simplest of tools, but the very planks had evidently been cut by hand from the rough logs that marked the entrance to their work-room cave.

The cliff itself was in the shadow, a dark pinkish brown, but the sun reached the iron-gray sands of the beach, and touched the tiny breakers into dazzling white. It was as warm as summer, and to Robert, from the north, it hardly seemed like a real world. To be so near Vesuvius, and to be able with one's spiritual hand to reach out and touch it, and to pass one's fingers, with delight, over its sweeping curves, was in itself an experience of worth. Here on this isolated beach, with only three Italians, and these wholly bent upon their own affairs, Robert felt as far from Paris as he did from Massachusetts. The loneliness did not disturb him. He liked to be so completely ignored. It had struck him throughout Italy as quite superb the way the native life goes on, regardless of the erratic and purposeless movements of the swarming *forestieri*. He would have liked to have speech with the beautiful apprentice, but perhaps it was better as it was, each movement full of unconscious grace and himself as unnoticed as a passing bird.

Robert wandered to the end of the little beach, to the projecting headland, and found an irregular tunnel leading into its very heart. He followed the broken line of the

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passageway for perhaps a hundred feet, and came out upon a tiny beach hardly larger than a bathroom. The rough lava extended like a wall on all save the water side, and even overhung the beach in lieu of a ceiling. The side towards the bay was a magnificent picture-window, in which one saw blue waters and the sun-smitten cloud canopy of Vesuvius. Back of the tiny beach was a cavern-like cleft that offered the most secure of dressing-rooms. By way of a door, there was a hundred feet of shadow.

Robert slipped out of his clothes, and in a moment was sporting in the cold blue waters. A little boat darted by, startlingly near, but it contained only a couple of fishermen, who showed their white teeth as they smiled and wished Robert the good day that he was having. Tingling with renewed life, he came out of the water into his fantastic dressing-room, and in a few moments was again in his clothes.

Robert wandered back through the little tunnel into the broad sunshine of the beach. He stretched himself lazily on the sands. It seemed to him that he had never felt so young. Something of the pagan joy of living went racing through his veins. Italy and the south had got into his blood. The over-strenuous life in Paris somehow seemed unnatural and remote. It was more sensible to be lying there on the sands, doing nothing but just living. There was no picture in all the Louvre or Luxembourg so beautiful as the luminous one that stretched out before him. If he wanted landscape, he had but to look over the blue waters to Vesuvius; if he wanted the picturesque, he had the warm pink cliffs; if he wanted something better than portraiture, he had only to watch the apprentice boy.

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Towards sunset, Robert aroused himself, and slowly climbed the wandering stairway to the rim of the garden, pausing in a dozen places to drink in that marvelous beauty of the Bay of Naples when the sun is sinking towards the western isles. Robert sat down on the old bench that stands at the edge of the garden. He sat there utterly content, asking nothing. He looked out over the waters to measure the full dimension of his content. It seemed as boundless as the view. Then the light began very gradually to fade, and more ethereal colors played over the sea and sky. They brought with them a more mystical and haunting beauty, the promise of something that sea and sky alone did not quite yield. In the less luminous picture there was the added value of mystery. Robert was keenly alive to the change, and his own mood at once responded. The pagan joy of life was not less intense than when he had emerged all glowing from the cold blue waters. He still felt the thrill of quicker blood. It was good to be young and strong and free. It was not that any of these satisfactions had grown smaller. But they no longer filled the whole of life. Around them like an enveloping, unescapable atmosphere was the sense of unexplored regions that promised yet greater possibilities. All unconsciously, Robert stretched out his hands in supplication. In his own soul there was a sense of this deeper necessity. Then there came to him, as there had once or twice before in this wonderful experience called Europe, an eclipse of his smaller personal self. For a moment he passed into the super-conscious, and was one with the palpitating color oceans of sea and sky. He was realizing what was needed to give the pagan joy of life an abiding peace. It was the touch

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of the spirit. Life became transfigured as it had been in York Minster, and Robert felt that never again ought he to be lonely or unhappy. He had but to beckon them, and the hosts of the air were his for company. He had but to turn his face upward, and he was in the presence of the divine. A greater thrill passed over him than had been induced by the cold water. In his cheeks there came a heightened color. It was the joy of the mystic coming into his own, an ecstasy vague, formless, incoherent, but capable of translation into high performance.

Below Robert, at the first turn of the path, a man and a woman, with a couple of children, stood looking out over the Bay. They spoke to Robert pleasantly and continued their scrutiny of the waters. At first Robert thought that, like himself, they were occupied with the sunset, but presently they turned back and moved briskly towards the Albergo. They were members of the Gargulio family, and had evidently seen what they came out to see. Robert swept the waters more carefully. The Nixe was moving off towards Naples, leaving behind her a trail of silvery light upon the face of the darkening waters. She was late that evening. Two small rowboats were slowly making their way towards Cocumella. One of the boats carried two passengers and the other three. Robert watched them disembark and cross the sands and climb the stairway. He felt no curiosity about them, — they were simply a part of the evening's panorama. The party of two came briskly up the zigzag path, as if that were the sole business of the hour. The other three travelers came slowly, not as if they were tired, but as if they wished to prolong the pleasure. None of them saw Rob-



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ert. He was sitting in the shadow, quite motionless. They passed by, dark, indistinct figures that might have been given up by the sea. It pleased Robert's fancy that they had been so near that he could have put out his hand and touched them as they passed, and yet that they had not seen him. It was a symbol of the mystery of life. It spoke of forces and influences unseen and unreal so long as one does not heed them, but quick with life the moment one turns the head.

## CHAPTER XVII

### OLD ACQUAINTANCES BECOME NEW FRIENDS

THE following morning, when Robert leisurely took account of his surroundings, he had the feeling that he was very well off. It would be pleasant to have Sappho and Miss Frothingham there; but whether they came or not, his sense of present satisfaction told him that this would be his home until well into April.

The Albergo della Cocumella was formerly a religious house, a summer retreat of the Neapolitan Jesuits. The breezes of a score or more of years have robbed it of all casuistry and left only an atmosphere of peaceful meditation. It is half country-house and half monastery. After the fashion of its kind, it is built around the four sides of a paved court, in the centre of which is an old well, rimmed with maiden-hair and other fern. Towards the Bay there is an arched doorway showing the reddish walls of the old garden; and in the very centre of the picture rises the great trunk of a stone pine, its velvet green top standing out sharp and clear against the blue of the sky. For nearly half the quadrangle, the Albergo is only one story, a design which leaves free outlook for the upper rooms of the other portion and makes possible the most delightful of roof-terraces. Robert found the terrace near his own room a capital lounging-place these warm, sunny days in early March. He never grew tired of looking across the tops of the orange trees and under the great cone-laden pines and over the blue waters to his ever-

smoking, ever-fascinating neighbor, Vesuvius. When no storm cloud hid the summit, the familiar column of white smoke lost itself in great white masses that might well have served Michelangelo as model for the resting-place of those heavenly hosts that Ezekiel saw. In spite of this familiarity, the great smoke cloud never lacked variety. On still days the columns rose straight and high, and spread out into a canopy like a marble support to the vault of the sky. But usually the air was stirring, and then the smoke streamer served as a huge weather-vane, even as a barometer, since in so exposed a locality as the Sorrento peninsula, the direction of the wind largely determines the character of the weather. But perhaps the greatest charm of Vesuvius to Robert was the sense of expectation which it aroused. It seemed to fulfill Donald's demand for the unexpected, and to do it in giant measure. Recently there had been hoarse rumblings and other show of activity. Sometimes, of a dark night, there could be seen a bright-red beacon light on the very summit, a little notice that the heart of the world is still on fire.

But it was late at night that Robert loved his rooftop terrace the best. Then the Albergo was dark and silent, and the whole Piano asleep. Usually there was no wind at that hour, and to the darkness and the silence was added the impressiveness of entire repose. When the moon was traveling elsewhere, the night rested like a mantle over the sleeping plain, and the stars, like faithful sentinels, shone out through the clear and darkly luminous air. Across the water were the lights of the ever-alert Naples, and further to the left the blinking eye of the

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revolving light on Capo Miseno. To the south and east and west rose the mountain walls of the Piano, first the rugged and grandiose heights which keep company with the forbidding Monte Sant' Angelo, then the one isolated peak of Monte di Chiosse and the low saddle over which passes the road to Amalfi, and then finally the gentler earth curves passing into the long, slow-descending hill line on the west. Nearer at hand were the silent, tomb-like walls of the white villas, half visible even in the darkness; and then, just over the terrace, the mysterious shadows of the old garden.

At such a time as this, one comes into touch with the larger and more spiritual side of Nature. In Robert's responsive heart, thoughts bestirred themselves which made him for the moment a brother of the subjective, contemplative East. It was no longer the twentieth century. Its too rapid pulse-beat was at a halt. Robert lived in a limitless universe, in which the past and present and future were all as one, brought into community in the infinite recesses of the human soul.

When the moon comes back from the western seas, and floods all this loveliness with her silver light, the beauty is less formless, and yet in that half light which suggests, but does not reveal, there is almost as much mystery as in the darkness. But there is greater hint of human hearts. The balconies and *loggie* of the neighboring villas were meant for friendly occupancy. The two towers, within a stone's throw, — if one is a good thrower, — mark the home of Marion Crawford, and are the very finger-posts of romance. In the other direction stood the home of Tasso. Now it has fallen into the sea, but the marble

statue in the Piazza bears witness to Sorrento's pride in the most gifted of her children.

Inside, the Albergo is spacious and serene, its vaulted ceilings and thick walls outlasting several generations of our own more perishable clay. The centre of its social life was the long, well-lighted corridor that stretches along one side of the inner courtyard and leads from the staircase to the gayly decorated dining-room. But Robert was not often indoors. If he was not in the immediate vicinity of the Albergo,—on the roof-terrace, in the garden, or down on the beach—he was pretty apt to be wandering about in the lanes of Sant' Agnello, or prowling among the shops of Sorrento, or climbing the hillsides back of the Piano. His life was not so systematic as it had been in Paris. He was not so alert, so eager, not so consciously hunting for personal reactions. Yet many things were coming to him, delicate impressions and subtle insights that are frightened away by too eager pursuit, and only enter the soul when it stands open and waits. Robert got up each morning without settled plan. He went to bed each night feeling that the day had brought its rewards. The nearest approach to systematic work that he ventured upon was a few lessons in Italian. But these he took not from any academic motive, but solely that he might talk the more readily with the children and the peasants. He had scraped acquaintance with the youthful Apollo who built boats on the Cocumella beach, and had even loaned an occasional hand to some of the simple boat-building operations. The Italian lessons were in marked contrast to the French lessons given by Pauline, or even to those of the over-fluent Madame Sylvestre.

Robert's teacher was a handsome young priest from the Cathedral Church at Sorrento. Robert promptly named him "St. Augustine," for he was the very image of the Saint as he appears in that picture of St. Augustine and Santa Monica that Robert had seen and liked in London, the picture by Ary Shaffer in the National Gallery. St. Augustine wanted very much to know English, and so the lesson became practically an hour of linguistic good-fellowship. His speech was singularly direct. After some small success on Robert's part, St. Augustine would look at him impressively and say quite as impersonally as if Robert were a beetle mounted on a pin, "*I perceive* that you are intelligent!"

But woe be to poor Robert if he became uplifted accordingly and neglected his verbs. St. Augustine would lift his slender forefinger to the side of his sensitive aquiline nose and remark with quite as little compunction, "*I perceive* that you have a short memory!" However, they got on well together. St. Augustine cared little for the modest fee, and Robert took his praise or blame with equal serenity. What each one wanted was to learn the other's language and to impart a little of his own. And if St. Augustine outstripped him, Robert took it all in good part, for it is the manner of the saints.

Robert had been at Cocumella just two weeks. He had had no news of Sappho and Miss Frothingham. He took the precaution of dropping in from time to time at the larger hotels, the Tramontana, the Vittoria, the Grande Bretagne, and even sometimes at the smaller ones, to see if he could find their names on the registers, but so far without success. He was too happily occupied to feel any

unrest at their non-appearance, but it would have been pleasant to have had some one to whom he could relate his small adventures and be sure of a sympathetic hearing. He had fallen into the habit of going late each afternoon to the old bench on the rim of the garden. He watched the sunset, and incidentally scanned the faces of those who came from Capri to Cocumella. The Nixe was more prompt than formerly, and the days themselves were increasing in length. Robert could no longer sit motionless in the shadow and be unobserved. On this particular evening a number of travelers came bobbing over the waters in the little rowboats and landed at the rough quay. Once on the sands, they separated into groups and came wandering up the zigzag path in the usual characteristic way,—some as if getting to the top were the sole question; others as if the climb were an imposition for which the proprietor was later to be held accountable; a few leisurely and with evident pleasure in the novelty and the beauty. Robert did not have Sappho and Miss Frothingham especially in mind,—he had seen so many travelers arrive, and they had not been of the number. As the mixed company trailed past him, however, he noticed far down the path a couple of ladies whose progress had been quite the slowest of all. They moved, not as if they were weary, or even rebellious at the long climb, but rather as if they were prolonging it out of mere pleasure. They stopped at the different turns in the path, and were evidently chatting about the outlook. The murmur of their voices came up to where Robert sat. As they drew nearer, he caught a familiar note. It was the musical, high-pitched voice that he so well remembered.

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Though he was so far above the ladies, the voice seemed to be with him rather than with them, to herald their approach rather than to come with them. As the ladies climbed higher, Robert could recognize their dress as well as their voices. Mrs. Costello still wore her marvelous habit of silver gray, and Miss Frothingham had on the traveling gown that she had used at Oxford. At the last turn the ladies sat down for several minutes, and Robert could easily have overheard their talk. He closed both ears, and sat a moment watching them. He was conscious of a distinct pleasure. They were only acquaintances, but they might become friends. It was already too late to see very distinctly, but Robert could detect the rare quality in both faces,—the calm and dignity in Sappho's, the delightful mobility in Miss Frothingham's.

Robert did not speak. Some months before, he would have called out to them in boyish pleasure. But now he felt that it would be an intrusion. Finally he decided not to speak to them until they came down to dinner. He softly left his bench and ran through the garden to the Albergo. He stopped a moment to see Vincenzo and bespeak for the two ladies his very best available rooms. But it seems that they had already written ahead and the rooms were waiting for them. Robert turned back once more to ask if they might not sit together, the three of them, at one of the little side-tables. Vincenzo readily promised, and Robert ran upstairs to dress.

In a few moments Robert was down in the corridor again, but the two ladies had not appeared. He sat down at the far end of the corridor, where he could see the staircase, and advance leisurely to meet the ladies when they did



appear. He was amused at this little provision for scenic effects, and told himself that he was growing very worldly. But the charge no longer brought any self-reproach. If houses and gardens were planned for vistas and scenic effects, why not human behaviour? The only thing was to keep things in due proportion, and to see that the human drama was always worthy of its elaborate setting. Robert was growing artificial. He had started out very simple, and he had meant to keep simple, but of late it had been dawning upon him that simple people are not interesting. He was beginning to take Donald's view of the matter. He had once repudiated it vigorously, but he was beginning to see that the people who are continuously interesting are not the people that one can exploit at a sitting, but are rather those highly evolved products, very complex, very artificial if you will, who present inexhaustible possibilities in the way of speech and action, but who are nevertheless just as wholesome and natural in their artificiality as the peasant is in his simplicity. It was a new point of view for Robert, and he had not yet worked it out to his own satisfaction. The part of the problem that most puzzled him was to determine which part of life ought to be kept simple and which part allowed to grow complex. He was now quite sure, and never more so than as he sat there waiting for Sappho and Miss Frothingham, that to have life all simple was to have it all dull, and he had got beyond the point where he could willingly tolerate that. But some instinct told him that there was an unescapable element in life that to be kept sound must be kept simple. Just what it was, he could not quite make out. It did not bother him, though, for he felt that sooner or later

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he would find out, was probably finding out all along, and that in the end he would be able to weave the fabric of his own life accordingly. So far, he liked the Italians better than any people he had ever known. He loved the children he met and talked with on his walks, the old men working in the fields, the boat-building Apollo, the outspoken St. Augustine. When he compared them with the English peasants, or even with the country people in New England, with those thrifty farmers in Vermont where he had spent several vacations, it seemed to him that the one group was steeped in interest and the other in dullness. What made the difference, — was it climate, or heredity, or religion, or education? These humble Italians that Robert had come to know were simple enough, in some things primally simple, but along with this beautiful simplicity they had subtleties and insights that made Robert himself feel like a bungler. They were not merely simple like his Vermont summer friends. They had an added touch of something that made them perennially interesting, and always lovable. Even Vincenzo, whose subtleties cost Robert an occasional five-franc piece, seemed to him more worth while than any servant he had seen in colder zones. It was a greater pleasure to give Vincenzo five francs than it was to give an English monotone a shilling, from which it will be seen that Robert had not yet reached the social stage where tipping ceases to be regarded as a necessity, and takes its place among the recognized pleasures of life.

The ladies were very slow in coming. But Robert was not impatient. He had plenty to think about. It rather heightened his pleasure to sit there and wait for them. It was like saving the best letter in one's daily mail until

the very last. Now that he had grown analytical, — and to-night Robert was looking at the world almost as Donald might have looked at it, — Robert realized that his lively anticipation of pleasure in meeting Mrs. Costello and Miss Frothingham rested upon no intimate feeling of friendship, for as yet he could not claim either of them as friends, but solely because they were both very highly evolved and very interesting human products. Mrs. Costello was far from simple. She was marvelously complex, marvelously artificial; and Miss Frothingham was less so only because she was younger. But in both women, this elaborate culture had preserved and even heightened an underlying simplicity that kept it sound to the very core. Robert knew that he might spend the whole evening with them, and to-morrow find them just as fresh and unexplored as ever. The thought gave him much the same sort of satisfaction that one might feel in beginning a book in many volumes, if at the same time the book were interesting.

But at last they came. Robert could hear their voices and the rustle of their gowns. When they reached the landing and turned to descend the last half-flight into the long corridor, they came into full view. Both women were in evening dress. As the night was somewhat warm, Alicia was all in white. Her embroidered muslin gown made her look more slender and more girl-like than Robert remembered her to have looked either on the steamer or in England. Her heavy coils of hair took on a deeper gold from the absence of color in her gown. As she spoke to Mrs. Costello she turned her face brightly towards her, as if to give her for the moment quite all of herself. Could Stephen

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have seen her, he would have admitted that it was no trick, but a habit, and much too pretty to be given over. Robert watched the two ladies with lively pleasure. They seemed to him in their way quite as rare as the best art treasures of Italy, and they had the added value of being alive.

Robert waited until they reached the bottom of the staircase. Then he rose quietly and went forward to meet them. He meant to move as slowly as they did, and to shake hands with them exactly in the centre of the corridor. This was the way he had visualized their meeting.

Alicia was the first to see him. "Why, there is Mr. Pendexter!" she cried, in a pleased voice, and involuntarily hastened forward. "How nice to see you again. Where did you come from?"

Robert's measured programme must have fallen through, for when he shook hands with the ladies, it was well over on their side of the corridor.

Mrs. Costello greeted Robert with equal cordiality. It was quite evident that both women were glad to be meeting him again. They stood and chatted for a few moments in the deserted corridor, for the most part asking and answering the unimportant questions which travelers commonly exchange. Robert meant not to be interrogative, but as we all know, a question, be it trivial, impertinent, or momentous, is, next to the weather, quite the easiest banality of conversation. Robert was conscious that he was making mistakes, as he always did when he was a little embarrassed. For a time he was the country boy again. It may have been a salutary set-back, for it must be confessed that as he sat waiting for the ladies to come down, he had felt dangerously well satisfied with himself.

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In a moment, however, he had himself in hand again, and was chatting with the easier tone of his later and more experienced self. He suggested that they should be having dinner. When he mentioned his arrangement about the small side-table, and asked if he had taken too great a liberty, the ladies both expressed their pleasure at the plan, and added kindly that it made them feel quite at home to be looked after so admirably. Robert felt the utter fatuity of his rejoinder, but for the life of him he could not help protesting that the one person he had looked after admirably was himself. Then he told them quite naïvely that the first day he had come to Cocumella he had thought how pleasant it would be to be sitting there just as they were, but that he had had little expectation of having his wish come true.

“That’s a good way to frighten off good fortune, — if you call our coming good fortune,” said Mrs. Costello. “Whatever you want, you must expect. That hurries it along.”

“It does with you, dear Mrs. Costello,” suggested Alicia. “But I think it’s because you always want what’s coming, and so get ahead of fate, every time.”

Mrs. Costello laughed and turned to Robert. “You see how easily Miss Frothingham pricks my philosophy. But, believe me, it does n’t all evaporate. If your friends were only here, the young lawyer and the poet, it would seem quite like York or Oxford.”

“But so much nicer!” said Robert.

“Ah, you love Italy, I see. I am so glad. And how do you find my dear Italians, — as delightful as Miss Frothingham and I do?”

"I have quite lost my heart to them, — men, women, children, and babies!"

"You and Mrs. Costello will get on famously," said Alicia, "and especially if you can tell her *why* you find them so delightful."

"I could never do that. I don't know, myself. First I thought it was because they were so simple; then I thought it was because they were so complex. One moment I like them because they are so indifferent to the *forestieri*, and the next moment because they are so intimate and friendly."

"Delicious," said Mrs. Costello. "You are going through the same puzzle that we all do."

"Have you solved it?"

"Not wholly, — perhaps not at all. I think they're all you say, and a lot more."

"Just a bundle of contradictions," said Robert.

"Oh, no, *no*, not that," protested Mrs. Costello. "I think their charm is that they have so many sides to their nature. It is quite inexhaustible. You may know an Italian all your life, and at the end he will do something to surprise you."

"Something pleasant?" asked Robert.

"It may be. But it's not necessarily pleasant or unpleasant. The thing is that it's unexpected."

"They're a puzzle, all right, from the babies up to old Vincenzo. It seems impossible, though, doesn't it? that people can be such opposites, — simple, complex, — indifferent, sympathetic."

"I think that is the easiest part of the puzzle," suggested Alicia. "If you notice, they are simple, consistently

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simple, along certain lines, and in other ways just as persistently complex."

"One can hardly call it consistent, though, to be sympathetic one moment and quite indifferent the next," said Robert.

"But are they?" questioned Mrs. Costello. "I should say that they are sympathetic all the time, but circumstances vary. They are as intuitional as animals. You know a well-bred dog is quite indifferent to people who don't care for dogs, and yet will jump all over those who do."

"What interests me," said Alicia, "is that Mr. Pendexter should care so tremendously for the Italians. It seems to me more inconsistent than anything the Italians themselves have ever done or ever will do."

Both Mrs. Costello and Robert laughed. "Why?" he asked; "because I'm a New Englander and, to be consistent, ought to disapprove of gayety and mirth?"

"Only partly that," answered Alicia. "I have just guessed something."

"What is that?"

"It is that you are not wholly a New Englander."

"A clever guess! No, I'm not. I'm coming to think that perhaps I'm not even half a one. My mother was from South Carolina."

"Ah, that explains everything," said Mrs. Costello, with interest. "Sons, as a rule, take after their mothers. Has it been some years since your mother left you?"

"Yes. I don't even remember her. She died when I was a very small boy, and I never knew any of her family. My father died soon after. I was brought up by

his sister, you know, my Aunt Matilda Pendexter. For her there was only one family, the Pendexters, and one section of the country, New England. So you see it was drilled into me that I was a New Englander, and a Pendexter, and nothing else. Italy is helping me to find my mother."

"How beautiful!" said Mrs. Costello, almost in a whisper. "My husband, you know, was an Italian. And through him Italy spoke to me of so many things, touched me into such new life. We must be good friends, Mr. Pendexter, for in a way we are the children of the same mother!"

"I have the feeling that we shall be the best of friends, and it pleases me to feel that. I have never had many friends, you know. But Miss Frothingham said 'partly.' I want to know the other half of her reason for thinking me guilty of such a terrible thing as inconsistency." Robert spoke lightly, but he felt a genuine interest in her answer.

"'Partly' is n't always a half," Alicia replied. "In this case it was only a quarter. The other three quarters of my reason was that I thought you adored simplicity."

"I used to, but I don't any more. Do you?"

"I might say the same thing," answered Alicia. "I used to, but I've been converted."

"I suppose you met a lot of simple people, and had to spend some time with them." Alicia nodded. "So did I. That's just what happened to me!" and Robert laughed merrily.

"Alicia, you are really very wicked to-night!" said Mrs. Costello.



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"No, I'm not, dear Mrs. Costello. The same thing happened to you, only it was in your last incarnation!"

Mrs. Costello smiled and, turning to Robert, inquired after his winter. Both ladies showed a genuine interest in so much of his doings as he chose to tell them. When Robert finished, Mrs. Costello said to her friend, "I think, Alicia, that we perhaps ought to tell Mr. Pendexter what brings us to Cocumella."

Robert turned towards Mrs. Costello with an air of attention that seemed to invite any confidence she felt it wise to bestow, but he did not put any question.

"We have a very dear friend in India, Mr. Pendexter, a most gifted woman, who has just written a book that her Indian friends regard as quite remarkable. She has done us the great honor to send the manuscript to us, and to ask us to edit it. It will take at least a month. Miss Frothingham and I are so deeply interested in the work that we are putting everything else aside. I am afraid we shall hardly be fit companions until it is all off our hands. We have chosen Cocumella because it's so delightfully quiet here. You see we are undertaking what our Catholic friends call a retreat."

"Then you will hardly want to know any one at Cocumella," said Robert, — "not even St. Augustine or Apollo!"

"What a droll combination," laughed Mrs. Costello. "One does n't think of them as being much together. Did you meet them in the Museum, or in the Piazza?"

"Neither. Vincenzo got me St. Augustine. He is a young priest who gives me Italian lessons. I found Apollo myself. He is the carpenter's boy who builds boats down

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on our little beach. You must take time to know both. They're really great fun."

"Perhaps later, but not now, please," said Mrs. Costello. "We must really think of nothing but the book."

"Would you like to have me go away?" asked Robert, very genuinely.

"Certainly not," answered Mrs. Costello, smiling; "that *would* be a misfortune, to have found you and then to have lost you at once. I thought we might have the pleasure of taking our meals together, or at least luncheon and dinner, — Miss Frothingham and I shall be having the breakfast-trays brought to our rooms, — and that perhaps you would be good enough to let us share your walks occasionally, when we have need of exercise."

Robert hastened to assure her that nothing would give him more pleasure.

"I was telling you this," continued Mrs. Costello, "so that you might not be sorry that we had come, or feel that we are going to intrude in any way on your own daily work. I know what it is to be a worker, and I always feel that I want to protect them. And perhaps now you'll tell us about your plans, and what brought *you* to Cocumella."

"I came to get warm," said Robert. "I was just a coward flying before the cold. And I stay on because I love it so much. I'm really not working, I'm just drifting. I just have a good time from morning till night. You see the Southerner in me is coming out!"

"But one can't have a good time without *doing* something," urged Mrs. Costello. "I shall suspect that you are writing a novel."

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"I wish I were, but I haven't wit enough. I occupy myself, of course. I walk and read and study a little Italian. Sometimes I sketch a little bit, and then I never get tired just prowling about in the shops and lanes and down on the beach. I'm almost a busy person, indeed, for the time never seems long enough to get in all I want. But all these little doings put together hardly deserve to be called a plan."

"It depends, does it not, upon the way you handle them?" suggested Alicia. "Walking, for example, the Master used to say, is a very spiritual exercise, if one meditates as one walks. And reading surely is a solid enough work, if one also thinks. What shall we say about the sketching, Wise One?" Alicia turned very prettily to her older friend, and Robert was struck anew with the beauty of the relation between them.

"Something equally brave, I am sure," said Mrs. Costello. "My husband used to say that it was a divine thing to draw or paint, if one only *saw*. He believed that we have so few artists, not because our hands are naturally clumsy or the technique of art difficult, but wholly because our souls are undeveloped, and we do not see. He had very little training himself, you remember. His father did not want him to be an artist, and made it cruelly hard for him. But Léon Costello saw, and so he was an artist. He got the training afterwards, but he was the artist first. Later, he used to say to his own pupils, 'My children, if you want to paint, — paint!' It was quite touching, I do assure you, to see the wonderful way in which they used to fall into two groups, quite as if some very clever person had sifted them out. One group went on with the work,

for those pupils were in earnest, — they saw. And the other group trifled for a while, but soon dissolved *completely* away. After a few weeks not one would be left. My husband never urged them to try. He would not coax them to remain in the studio. He always let them go. He would say to me, ‘No, my dear, it is of no use, — the inward fire is not there! They cannot paint, if they have nothing to say. Let them go into the world, — yes, let them suffer, if need be. It is not such a bad thing to suffer, if in the end the soul wakes up. It is infinitely better than not to feel anything. These young persons that you would have me be crutches for do not feel. They must get on fire, even if the fire burns! Then they can do something. But not now, — not yet!’ It took me some years to come to my husband’s point of view. It is so bitter to fail. I wanted always to smooth over the failure, and set the people on their feet, and urge them to go on. Léon Costello would weep at the failures, but he would not let the tears be seen. He showed me that the tragedy was not in the paint-brush, but in the soul itself, and that the cure must be in the soul, too. God himself, Léon Costello used to say, cannot cure a sick soul. It must cure itself by casting out the seeds of its own malady, the sloth, the self-indulgence, the selfishness, and then redemption is at hand!”

Although Mrs. Costello’s voice was so high-pitched, the tone was very low, almost a whisper, and its musical quality had never been more evident. It seemed to Robert not so much an outer voice speaking, as an inner voice in his own spirit.

Alicia always listened attentively whenever Mrs. Cos-

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tello spoke. Alicia seemed, indeed, to be thinking with her friend, and now, when Mrs. Costello stopped speaking, Alicia's words came almost as a continuation. "It seems to me that one might say the same about all art, about every attempt to express one's self. It is quite the same in writing, is it not? One needs careful training. There is a distinct technique to be acquired. But the issue does not rest here. It is whether one has something to say. It is not a question of one's ability to *write*; it is a question of one's ability to *live*."

"Yes," said Mrs. Costello, "there is but one art, since art is the outward expression of the human spirit. But there are different avenues of expression for different temperaments. If I may venture so personal a remark, I should say, Mr. Pendexter, that aside from some special and infrequent occasions, writing would not be the natural way for you to express yourself. It happens to be for Miss Frothingham. But I should say that it would n't satisfy you to speak in words or in sounds. They have not body enough. You are too conscious of form and color and the material setting of life."

"I have great faith in your judgment," Robert answered, "but I can't think of myself as a painter or even as a sculptor. I hardly knew what these terms meant until a few months ago, and even now I am just beginning to learn."

"No, you will not be either. Something would keep you from it. Since we are, in a way, children of the same intellectual mother, I may speak quite frankly, may I not? One always thinks of young men and careers in the same connection. I fancy that when you return

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to America, it will be to take up some career, will it not?"

"Yes, I must be doing something. I could never lounge all my life. It's going to be a puzzle to hit on just the right thing. Perhaps I shall get at it by what Mr. Morse calls a process of exclusion, by ranging up various careers and cutting out the impossible ones. It would be melancholy, though, if none remained!"

"I think you may dismiss that source of worryment," said Mrs. Costello, lightly. "There is something for every one to do, and it's one's very particular business to find out what it is."

"Would you mind telling me — I think you're quite right about it — just why it seems to you I could never be a painter or sculptor?"

"Not in the least," replied Mrs. Costello. "To be great, a painter needs a wealth of imagination. Léon Costello had it and so he was great. A painter must see the world wholly as a vision, quite divorced from uses. In a word, he must be an extreme idealist. If I may say so, you have under your undoubted ideality too practical a bent to be a painter. If you were to paint a picture, you would want it to tell a pretty definite story, rather than to symbolize the more permanent elements in life. And that would be quite mediocre art, wouldn't it? In sculpture you would be handicapped in much the same way. I think you could do portrait busts, but they would represent men and women at some one moment in their career. You would not, I think, be able to catch the spirit of the whole life and what it really stood for. It would be an instantaneous photograph taken at some fortuitous moment, and not

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presenting the composite picture which would show us the full human measure. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes, I think I do, and I think it is all true, fatally true."

There was a look of genuine depression on Robert's face, for Mrs. Costello's analysis seemed to him only too true.

But on Mrs. Costello's own face there was no trace of any shadow. She did not even hasten as she added, "Yes, fatally true as regards your being a painter or a sculptor. But you had n't thought of being either one of these! The absence of faculty and the absence of desire to exercise it go hand in hand more frequently than we sometimes remember. It is also true, my friend, — fatally true, if you like the term, — that the qualities which would keep you from doing what you *don't* want to do, will in good season help you in what you *do* want to do!"

There was no withstanding the cheer of Mrs. Costello's voice and words. Robert's face cleared up and he laughed softly. It was such a comfort to look at his limitations in this larger way. "And what shall I want to be doing?" he asked.

"Ah, that's your part of the problem. When the time comes to decide, you will know!"

As they parted for the night, both Mrs. Costello and Alicia gave Robert their hand. They had enjoyed the evening, they said, and hoped to see him at luncheon on the following day.

After the ladies had gone, Robert wandered off to his favorite roof-terrace. Now there was little to be seen, save a dark abyss of shadows, with the lights of Naples sparkling in the distance, and above all, the deep violet,

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star-studded sky. Robert sat down on the top of the wall. He liked the vague formlessness of the prospect that stretched before him. It was dark and unknown, like his own future, but there were the sparkling lights, and above everything else, the calm, eternal stars. His mood was one of great elevation. He foresaw nothing definite, hoped for nothing definite. But he felt that a new chapter was opening in his life, and that new currents and new influences were astir. And especially he thought of his mother. She had never been a conscious factor in his life, for he had no memory of her person. But he was beginning to realize that her blood was also in his veins, and that he was not wholly a Pendexter. The thought filled him with a new hope and a new tenderness.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### ALICIA

LIFE at the Albergo della Cocumella is a quiet, dream-like process, but the very monotony has a charm about it. Mrs. Costello and Alicia felt that they had come to quite the right place for their literary work, and Robert began to feel, as the days swept around, that wherever the ladies were was quite the right place for him. He became conscious of new values and new influences. And above all he was conscious of a profound harmony in his surroundings. His new friends and his new home both seemed to breathe the same possibility, — the possibility of a life alert and yet serene, purposeful and yet undogmatic. In Paris, as we have seen, Robert was for taking the kingdom of heaven by violence. At Cocumella, it seemed to lie all around him. To enter in was not a process of assault, but the gentler process of opening the eyes.

The outward events of Robert's life were very simple, but very human. He was becoming interested in people, and not alone the highly evolved people like Mrs. Costello and Alicia, but also the humbler people of the Albergo and the Piazza. His concern for people was helpful in just the proportion that it was disinterested. One sunny day it occurred to Robert that the servants of the Albergo, in addition to having names and domestic functions, also had individual desires and needs. With Vincenzo he had already struck up a friendship. Now he began to go down the line, and to find that all around him a very human drama was

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going on, quite as worth while as the more concentrated productions at the Odéon. Vincenzo was helped in his ministrations by his little son Raffaello and his godson Antonino, and also by a strange man of the mighty name of Generino. Raffaello was a mite of a boy, only twelve years old, and in his tiny dress-suit looked like a grown man seen through the wrong end of an opera-glass. Sometimes at midnight, when Robert made his way downstairs along the dark corridors, a letter to be mailed in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, he would find this little mite still at work, perhaps scrubbing the tessellated floor of the entrance hall. Robert had not thought to find such cleanliness in Italy. Then he would constitute himself educational adviser to Vincenzo, but judging from the sand-man too often visible in the small Raffaello's dark eyes, this excellent counsel was not acted upon. Antonino was a sunny youth, as became the namesake of the patron saint of Sorrento. He had a fondness for American flags. Robert once owned a pretty silk flag, but that was when he first went to Cocumella. Now it was Antonino's. The boy came and asked for it. Robert thought that he was lending it to him, but it seems that he gave it, and he never had the heart to correct the mistake. Robert learned that Antonino would soon be going into the army. He would get two soldi a day. But he was not averse to going. For one thing, he would wear a hat with a great black plume of down-falling cock's feathers, and that would be becoming!

Robert was interested to find that in spite of their pre-occupation with the Indian manuscript, both Mrs. Costello and Alicia knew all the humble folk of the Albergo as

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well as he did, and through Angelina, of the brooms and dust-brushes, extended their knowledge even further.

Nor was the life devoid of pretty merry-making. The Tarantella came to the Albergo as often as a sufficient number of *forestieri* were found willing to pay for it. Antonino's pretty sister danced in the Tarantella. She was to have married Vincenzo's older son, but the boy was of a domestic mind and ranged the Tarantella on one side and himself on the other. It was a rash measure, for at Sorrento the Tarantella is very fascinating. Catarina chose the Tarantella and the boy went off to Rome. When Catarina danced, Vincenzo watched Catarina, and Robert watched Vincenzo. It was easy to see that Vincenzo regarded his son as a person of more than doubtful taste. In truth, Catarina was the pearl of the Tarantella, so sweet and wholesome, as well as so pretty, that it was no desecration to watch her dance. The troupe was a merry one, perhaps the best in Italy. There were five or six girls, and perhaps as many men, dressed in lovely, hundred-year-old costumes of silk and velvet, rainbows faded into beauty, and armed with the more slender instruments of music,—castanet, tambourine, mandolin, and guitar. In the background were other musicians in plainer vestments, effectively handling the 'cello and violin.

The singing could not truthfully be praised, but the dancing was altogether charming. The main dance of the Tarantella is a slow quadrille, enlivened by the use of bright scarfs and castanets and tambourines, and graced by a considerable show of posing and tableaux. Then there are special dances and farces. If the audience is mainly English-speaking, the funny little love scenes of mixed

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sugar and vinegar usually terminate in some abrupt declaration in English which is pretty sure to bring a laugh. Then the orchestra strikes up the national airs, "Hail Columbia" and "God save the King," and all the company rise with more than formal sentiment. The Tarantella is over. Vincenzo collects the silver in the morning, and suggests that if the gentlemen would care to give an extra lira for the wine, it would be a gracious deed and quite in harmony with the gentlemen's well-known goodness. Robert always yielded to this artistic persuasion and gave at least two lire.

Mrs. Costello and Alicia entered into the spirit of the merry-making most thoroughly. The hard, metallic voices distressed Mrs. Costello more than the others guessed, but the innocent abandonment of the singers and their pretty costumes, and above all the sweet smile of Catarina, quite enchanted her. "The child has the genuine spirit of the artist," she exclaimed; "I quite understand why she did not marry Vincenzo's son. She did entirely right. But I must say that he was a surprisingly foolish fellow not to take her, Tarantella and all!"

"You have a touch of romance in you that is quite inexhaustible, Carissima," said Alicia, laughing.

"Yes, why not? It would be a dull world with love left out, wouldn't it, Mr. Pendexter? I wish we might talk with Catarina."

"That can be easily arranged," said Robert. "I'll ask Vincenzo to bring her up and introduce her."

Robert started to go on his errand, but Mrs. Costello quickly detained him. "Oh, don't do that, please. It would be too formal, and we should get nothing but a

little surface talk. Let us go down to her. Don't you think we might, Alicia?"

Alicia assented, and the three moved down the corridor to where the dancers sat fanning themselves and catching their breath. There was a vacant chair next to Catarina. Mrs. Costello sat down in it, and took the girl's hand in hers. "My dear," she said in Italian, "you have given us great pleasure, — my friends and me. I want to thank you for it." It was not so much the words as Mrs. Costello's friendly smile and manner that made her approval so winning.

The girl showed her big white teeth as she smiled back at Mrs. Costello. "It is nothing!" she said simply; "I should like to do it for you again. I could dance and sing all the night long. You must not thank me. Really I do it for myself. If there was nobody in the room, and I had the music, I would do just the same. But I like to have you pleased, my lady. That gives me happiness, too, — you and your friends;" and Catarina smiled up at Alicia and Robert so charmingly that they both smiled back with ready sympathy.

"I know now why you do it so well," said Mrs. Costello. "It is because you love it. You have the true artist spirit. Have you had instruction?"

"Yes, my lady. My mother danced the Tarantella before I was born. She taught it to me when I was a little girl."

"Ah, it is in the blood! My dear, does your mother still dance?"

"I hope so — yes, I believe so," answered Catarina. "She is with the blessed saints. But it would not be

heaven to my mother, — or to me, — if we could not dance!”

Mrs. Costello pressed the girl's hand. “I like to hear you say that, my dear. It is what my husband used to say of *his* art. He was a great painter.”

Catarina did not say anything, but when Mrs. Costello looked up, she smiled a smile of such rare sympathy that an unaccustomed mist dimmed Mrs. Costello's eyes. “Thank you, my dear,” she said, “but we ought not to keep you any longer. I did want to ask you a little about your voice, though. It tires you to sing, *non è vero?*”

“Yes, my lady. That does not come so easy as to dance. My mother did not teach me that. I just had to learn it myself. I could not afford to go to Napoli to the great Signor Rondinella. He would have made me sing much better. I do not sing well, my lady, I know that.”

“No, you do not sing well,” answered Mrs. Costello, quite honestly, — “not as well as you are going to. It is because you do not use your voice aright. It is not so sweet as when you talk. May I help you, if I can? I think I could give you a few suggestions that I got in Paris from Madame Marchesi. Come and see me to-morrow afternoon, will you not? Perhaps later we might go together and consult the great Signor Rondinella. I think my husband used to know him in Florence.”

Catarina clasped her hands together in a transport of delight. “Oh, my lady,” she cried, “you and the saints are very good. It is what I have always wanted!”

“At least you are half right, my dear, — the saints *are* very good,” answered Mrs. Costello, rising. Catarina rose

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also, and bade them all a pretty good-night. "Ah, these Italians," said Mrs. Costello to the others in English. "I never speak with them that they do not fill me with envy. They do so naturally what we with all our art never do quite so well. Is it because our culture is still so self-conscious?"

"You, at least, have no cause to upbraid yourself, dear Mrs. Costello," said Alicia. "I doubt if even an Italian could have told that girl that she sang abominably, and made her love her for it!"

"Alicia!" Mrs. Costello exclaimed protestingly, "I *did n't* tell the girl that she sang abominably, — did I, Mr. Pendexter?"

"No," answered Robert, "you did n't *tell* her, but you certainly made her wholesomely aware of it."

"That was where your art came in, Carissima."

"Well, my dear, it was the truth."

At this both Alicia and Robert laughed, and Alicia added, "I hear that most of the men sing in the cathedral choir. I like the idea of it. We must go to the cathedral some day and hear them. I met the Archbishop the other day. He bowed most amiably and bestowed a blessing."

"They are charming, simply charming," said Mrs. Costello, with an air of conviction. "Do you still find them so, Mr. Pendexter?"

"Indeed I do," answered Robert, enthusiastically. "But I love the children best of all. I must tell you something that happened to me yesterday. I was walking along a lonely road upon the hills. I did n't know that any one was within a mile of me, when suddenly, as if they had

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sprung out of the ground, three small boys stood in front of me. I have n't the slightest idea where they came from. Each boy held out his hand. I shook my head and said that I sometimes gave money to old people who could n't work any more, but never to boys; that boys ought to work and not beg."

"A very proper doctrine," said Alicia. "Were they duly impressed?"

"I'm afraid not. The smallest boy, surely not over eleven, went through the customary pantomime of eating macaroni, and said that he was hungry, *very* hungry. He was such a chubby, well-fed little boy that I just laughed. I gave his red cheeks a pinch and said that he could n't possibly be hungry, that such a healthy-looking little boy had always had enough to eat. He was somewhat abashed, but only for an instant. He looked up at me and said with an air of entire conviction, 'Well, you know if I ate more, I might grow to be as tall as you are!' I could n't help it, I just had to give each boy twenty centesimi. For the moment, at least, they were supremely happy. Each boy shook hands with me and thanked me most politely. Not content with that, they walked with me a full mile, and unconsciously gave me a better Italian lesson than St. Augustine does. Did I not find Sorrento charming? Did I know that Torquato Tasso had been born here? Was I fond of watching Vesuvio? Could it be as pretty as this in the country where I came from? — a perfect string of questions."

"It was quite wrong of you to give them the money," said Alicia; "but I should have done just the same thing. They are perfectly irresistible."



"They have a social genius, these pretty little people of Italy," said Mrs. Costello. "It is quite worth the trouble of learning something of their beautiful language just for the pleasure of talking to them."

"I feel repaid for all the work I've done with St. Augustine," replied Robert. "If I forget all my little stock of Italian, it will still have been quite worth while."

"They are so clever," added Alicia, — "a mere shrug suffices."

"I can do a trifle more than that," said Robert, laughing. "Ask St. Augustine."

Alicia laughed, too. "Forgive the implication. I really did n't mean to be wicked."

"Let us admire them," suggested Mrs. Costello, "but let us be honorably careful not to spoil them. It seems to me that the *forestieri* are doing their best to spoil all the children, here and at Capri and all over Italy. Happily, in all childish hearts God seems to keep always an eternally unspoiled corner. I think, Alicia, that we must be saying good-night to Mr. Pendexter." Mrs. Costello turned to Robert and added, "Thank you, dear friend, for a very pleasant evening."

It was the first time that Mrs. Costello had ever spoken to Robert in just this intimate way, and it gave him peculiar pleasure. He knew that with her it was no idle phrase. He felt honored, and very humble, too, that so rare a woman should have given him her friendship. He went up to bed pondering as to how he might be worthy of this honor.

The following morning Alicia surprised Robert by com-

## THE LIGHTED LAMP

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ing down to breakfast. As every one knows, breakfast at Cocumella is far-famed. It is not limited to coffee and bread and butter and honey, the orthodox Continental breakfast, but adds hot toast and *ponente*, and oranges gathered fresh from the garden, and boiled eggs into the bargain, — two if you are a man, but only one if you belong to the superior sex. It is this last discrimination which has sent the reputation of the Albergo far and wide. The men like the substance of the two eggs; the women the dainty compliment which credits them with appetite for only one. Robert usually ate breakfast at the large table. When he was not too prompt, he had the pleasure of agreeable talk with a couple of wholesome English girls, the Hon. Emily Mainwaring and the Hon. Lucy Mainwaring. They were friendly, but perplexing. For two or three mornings the Hon. Emily would sit next to Robert; then for an equal number of mornings the Hon. Lucy would take that place. Robert could not quite fathom the philosophy of this circulation. When he was proud, he told himself that it was an arrangement for enabling them to share the benefits of his instructive conversation; but when he felt humble, the alternation looked to him like a Christian device for helping to bear one another's burdens; and as he commonly felt more humble than proud, the plan on the whole was depressing. When Alicia came down, she naturally went to their own little side-table, and Robert at once joined her. This was the easier, as his own breakfast had not yet been served, and the Hon. Emily and the Hon. Lucy had not yet made their appearance.

“What good luck to have you at breakfast!” cried

## ALICIA

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Robert. "This explains why I felt so tip-toppy when I got up this morning, — so jolly glad to be alive, as our English friends would say. How does it all happen?"

"Oh, I just thought I would see what it is like in the *salle à manger* in the morning," Alicia answered. "And then I'm going directly out to sketch. It's too perfect a day to stay indoors. Mrs. Costello will get on without me. Would you care to come along?"

"Of course I would," said Robert. "I'll fetch my own sketch-book, if I may, and see for once how the thing ought to be done."

Robert's interest in sketching was not keen enough, however, to make him an advocate of haste. He was consciously glad that the Cocumella breakfast was so famously elaborate, and he lingered over this meal as long as he well could. It was the first time that he and Alicia had ever eaten together alone. It seemed to give their friendship an air of pleasant intimacy. There was no egotism in the lingering. It was just pleasant to be sitting there face to face with Alicia, and to have her all to himself. When Mrs. Costello was present, Alicia seemed to have eyes and ears for no one else. But with Mrs. Costello upstairs, Alicia's delightful habit of turning so brightly to the person with whom she was talking made it seem for the moment that she was giving herself wholly to Robert. He knew it was only a habit, and that it signified nothing; but it took complete possession of him nevertheless, and made it seem as if soul touched soul.

Alicia had already settled upon the subject for her sketch. It was to be the charming little lane that leads down to the sea from where the main highway turns so

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abruptly up to Sant' Agnello. She and Robert were soon settled at what Alicia considered a suitable point of view, their camp-chairs facing the sunny pink walls, and their backs turned to the sun. Alicia had a light easel before her and a sketch-block for water colors. Robert had merely his sketch-book and pencils, for as yet he did not venture anything beyond black and white.

"The light is not quite right yet," said Alicia. "I think we would better wait a few minutes until the sun gets up a little farther, — let us say until the shadow has gone off that pretty bed of mignonette."

Robert pulled out his watch. "That will be at least a quarter of an hour. Meanwhile I see something pleasant to do." He sprang up and ran over to the flowers. "I will gather you a charming bouquet."

"Oh, please don't," cried Alicia. "Please don't touch them. It kills them to pick them. I hate to have them murdered."

Robert stopped in astonishment. "Do you never wear them?" he asked, "or have them in your room?"

"Never, unless some one unkindly sends them to me. Then I nurse them along for as many days as I can, and feel guilty of murder every time I look at them. I like the story of the Empress Komio, that Mr. Okakura told us. She was speaking of flowers offered to the Buddha. I don't remember the exact words, but it was something like this: 'If I pluck them, the touch of my hand will defile. So I offer them just as they are, standing in the fields and meadows, all these beautiful, wind-blown flowers, to the Buddhas of the past and the present and the future.' Don't you think that's a pretty story?"

"Moderately pretty, for then the empress could offer so many flowers and such fresh ones. But it's different *giving* the flowers,—just a little bouquet of them—to a lady."

"Don't you think a lady would care for many flowers and to have them always fresh?" asked Alicia, smiling.

"Of course, but she has those already. I believe women always see flowers, all there are. But it's nice to have a few for your very own, so you can handle them and smell them."

"But think of the poor flowers," Alicia persisted.

"All right. I *am* thinking of them. If I gave them to you, I think they would rather die in such a service than live without it!"

"Bravely said," cried Alicia. "I see you agree with dear Mrs. Costello. She feels that we ought sometimes to accept a service whether we want it or not, just for the sake of the giver."

"May I bring you the flowers, then?"

"I think you must," answered Alicia. "That would be the only logical thing to do now, would n't it? But not more than two or three, please. I will let them acquire merit by dying for me!"

Robert chose fastidiously, and at last brought her three perfect branches. He seated himself on his camp-chair. The shadow had retreated but halfway across the bed of mignonette, so he and Alicia still waited. There was a silence for some moments. Alicia could be perfectly silent without embarrassment or any feeling that silence demanded an apology. Robert was slowly learning to do the same, but the accomplishment was still too recent to be

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exercised without effort. As a result, Robert's silences were never perfect. They had the nervous tension of mere pauses. Perhaps Alicia felt this, for presently she turned to Robert and said, "I should much like to see your sketches; may I?"

Robert hesitated. He meant never to hesitate or apologize, but like his acquired silence, the habit was new, and halted.

"Never mind," said Alicia, kindly, "if you would prefer not to show them."

Robert handed her the book eagerly. "But I really want you to see them," he hurried to say, "and to tell me what's wrong about them. I only hesitated because they're so poor. I'm almost ashamed to let you see them!"

Alicia took the book when she saw that Robert really wanted her to. "I don't see that you have any cause to be ashamed," she said. "You never claimed that your sketches were good." She turned over the leaves slowly, giving each sketch very careful attention. But she made no comment. When she had finished, she turned back and looked at several of the sketches a second time. Then she returned the book to Robert. "They are very different, are they not?" she asked.

"Yes. I tried a great variety of subjects, just for practice, you know."

"I did n't mean that," Alicia answered, with a bright smile. "One would not wish to go on sketching the same thing, or even the same class of thing. That would be very dull. I mean that the sketches are so totally different that I should never have guessed that they were made by the same person. Were they?"

"Yes," replied Robert. "At least, they were all made by me. I can't say that it was always the same 'me.'"

"Do they seem the same to you?" Alicia asked.

"Yes and no," said Robert. "I like some of them much better than the others. But they all belong to the same family. As I look them over, I have a feeling that it was I who did them, but that I was luckier in some cases than in others. What would you say was the difference?"

Alicia laughed, and answered with a touch of mischief in her voice, "To be perfectly frank, the difference is that some of them — two or three — are so very good!"

Robert laughed too, a hearty, boyish laugh, for now he felt perfectly at ease. "And the rest," he said, "are so very poor?" Alicia nodded. "I knew that," he continued; "sometimes I struck it, and sometimes I did n't."

"The difference seems to me much greater than mere luck," Alicia replied. "It is as if the sketches had been made by quite different persons. It interests me, for I want to know which is the real Mr. Pendexter, the one who can sketch or the one who can't!"

"Both are, I guess," said Robert. "I used to be just one person before I came to Europe. But now I am two or three, — a half a dozen, — in fact, I hardly know myself. Sometimes I think I ought to have stopped in Doane Street and gone on dealing in coffee and spices!" Robert spoke almost bitterly, as a man wearied with incessant fighting over issues he does not understand.

Alicia looked at Robert quickly. "Don't say that!" she begged. "That would make any one who cared for you almost hate you, — that is, if they believed you meant it."

"Would you hate me?" asked Robert.

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"If I cared for you, I should certainly hate you; and the more I cared, the more I should hate. One does n't like a man to turn back. You have put your hand to the plow, and now there's but one thing to do."

"I'm not a coward!" said Robert, proudly.

"I know you're not. If I thought you were, I should n't take the trouble to talk to you!"

"The bother is that I can't see. If I could see the furrow and where it leads to, I'd follow it, even if it meant death."

"Any one would," Alicia answered. "It would n't take much courage to do that! But there is no furrow. It's the man with the plow who makes the furrow. And if there were one already made for us, all the fun would be gone from the game. One would better be selling coffee and spices than to be led by the nose into predestined glories of the first order. You would still have the mild excitement of wondering how many pounds you could sell! It is vastly better to have made those three really good sketches, and to have the rest as poor as they are, than to have had them all poor. One cannot take a journey and yet stand still. I wonder what inertia gets into our blood that we are always seeking an abiding-place, always asking for rest. Why this heart-broken quest for something that, if we got it, would drive us to opium? There is no possible standing still for any one who is genuinely alive. There are temporary havens, like Cocumella, where one may catch one's breath, but there is no permanent rest. The secret of happiness is to find serenity in motion, to glory in the process as well as in the result. We are all *en route*. It chanced, dear Mr. Pendexter, that you stood still for a long time,



## ALICIA

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— thirty-four years, I think you told me, — and when at last you got started, you traveled so rapidly that it has made you dizzy. Surely you would n't want to stand still again? ”

“My God, I would not!” Robert answered passionately. “It's not the unrest that's eating me. It's the uncertainty. If I could only see! But I grope along in the dark without one shred of certainty. I am pulled this way and that by a hundred impulses. They might fight over me like furies and welcome, if I could only see that I was moving towards a definite end, and that it was good. I am tossed here and there like a sand-bag in the hands of fate, — but I see no goal!”

“There is no goal,” said Alicia, quietly.

“No goal!” cried Robert, almost fiercely. “Surely you don't mean to urge that one is to toss about like this *forever*.”

“To toss about, — perhaps yes,” answered Alicia. “But not like this, not at fever heat. The soul may find serenity and peace in the midst of the rush and whirl. The greater the outer turmoil, the more varied the panorama, the more rapid the change, — in short, the more terrible the storm of events, — the richer the material out of which the soul may gather knowledge and enlightenment. I am not, you see, an advocate of the simple life. If nothing happened, what stupids we should be, how intolerably dull! If we keep our heads, the more that happens, the better. It was your own master, Emerson, who said that all life is discipline. Don't pray for peace in the outer world. Pray for storms, cyclones, thunderbolts, the fiercest, wildest uproar imaginable, and let the peace be in the soul, which

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gathers from this whirlwind the seeds of knowledge and wisdom. After all, what counts? Your house is struck by lightning, — let it be! Perhaps you stayed in it too much and valued it too highly. Your money vanishes, — let it go! Perhaps it was a prison, and held you back from greater flights. Your friend dies, — mourn for him and be comforted. You may have leaned on him too heavily, and will now learn to stand alone. What really counts? — but one thing, dear friend, and that is the soul. All else must minister to that or be as worse than nothing. And as for this goal that we all so plague ourselves about, it is not fixed, I think, not something definite, — not even, perhaps, in the mind of God Himself. It may be indicated, but it is never specified. It is for us to create it. And we *do* create it, Mr. Pendexter, every day of our lives. The world is to-day just what we have collectively willed it to be. But the destiny of the world — the total goal — shifts from day to day, since it is made up of our individually chosen goals, and these are constantly shifting. Personally, I have quite given over the thought of any settled goal, and I can't regret it, for now the vista is infinite. I know what seems to me now to be worth while, and I live! But to-morrow I shall also live, and the values of my choice will be so much the larger. What a tremendous, exhilarating thought, dear Mr. Pendexter, that you and I can change the destiny of the world, — you and I, two tiny creatures, sitting here in this lovely lane with idle, folded hands!"

"Yes, *together*," said Robert. Then he suddenly realized that the word might have a special meaning, and blushed furiously. But Alicia either did not notice it, or

else chose quite to ignore any personal application, for she answered with the same even enthusiasm and without change of manner, "Yes, you and I, and dear Mrs. Costello, and the Master, and all the other souls that are *alive*. The world is ours. We can do with the grand old Mother as we will!"

The sun had more than covered the bed of mignonette. Alicia set about her sketch and was soon absorbed in it. When she painted, she painted very rapidly, but there were long intervals when she seemed to be doing nothing. In reality she was studying her subject, and quite forgot Robert and all the external world save that little bit of it which she was trying to seize and reproduce. Robert did not attempt to sketch; he was not in the mood for it. He sat there very quietly, watching Alicia. It was some time before she noticed that he was not at work. "Why, Mr. Pendexter, you are doing nothing!" she cried almost reproachfully.

"Yes," said Robert, slowly, "I *am* doing something. I am watching *you*."

"Have you found out my method?" Alicia asked gayly.

"No," admitted Robert, "I have n't."

"It is really very simple. It is the Japanese method. Most of the time I do not even have the brush in my hand. I sit and study what I want to paint. I do this until I feel quite sure what is essential and what accidental. Then I make up my mind which of the essential elements must be emphasized to bring out the special meaning I want to express in the picture —"

"And then," laughed Robert, "you go to sleep over it! I saw you close your eyes several times."

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"I do nothing of the sort," protested Alicia. "I close my eyes, but it is only to see if I have visualized the picture. When I have done that, I add what dear Mrs. Costello calls 'the personal equation.' It is my own contribution to the bare suggestion offered by Nature. If one did not do that, one might as well take photographs."

"May I watch you work?" asked Robert, drawing his chair a little nearer, so that he could see the sketching-pad and watch the actual process of putting on the colors. "Would it bother you?"

"Not in the least," answered Alicia. "Watch me all you like. Ask questions, too, if you want, — but only when I have my eyes open, please. I don't like to be interrupted when I am trying to feel the picture."

Then came another long silence.

Robert did not care to ask questions. When Alicia worked with her brush, he watched her only casually. But when she had her eyes closed, he studied the sketch intently. He was trying to divine her mood, and to guess what personal element she was mixing with the sun-smitten pink walls and the brilliant foliage and the transparent sky. Rather shyly Robert allowed his eyes to wander from the sketch to Alicia's face. Alicia scarcely seemed to breathe. Had it not been for the wholesome color of the flesh, one might have thought it the face of the dead. Robert was struck with its beauty and its nobility. He felt that Alicia had attained something which he had not yet been able to grasp, or even quite to formulate. Involuntarily, he began to compare Alicia's face to Pauline's. But he instantly put the thought aside. He felt that it was not fair to Pauline. Then the old horrible loneliness

swept over him. He stood between two worlds, Pauline's and Alicia's. He knew that Pauline's world was not for him. Even in Paris, he had been smitten by its limitations. The warmth and comfort of Pauline's world attracted him, but all the time a deeper self had pressed its own vague, incoherent needs. In Robert's soul there was eternal warfare. The days of peace were but the days of an armed truce.

The sun was warm and the air genial in the little lane leading down to the sea, but Robert shivered as with physical cold. He was thinking of the inevitable tragedy had he married Pauline, and afterwards discovered that in her beautiful natural history world there was for him no abiding-place and satisfaction. Then, very swiftly, he thought of the still deeper tragedy had he married her and been content. It seemed to him that he could hardly have hoped to add the needed touch to both lives when as yet he had not been able to add it to one. Robert's life at Cocumella was full of sensuous warmth and color. His artistic instinct was each day satisfied and comforted. But under all this frank and wholesome appeal to the senses, there was an inner and a deeper life throbbing. Without in any way discrediting the beautiful body and heart of the world, it spoke to him of the more abiding life of the spirit, of the eternal undercurrent that alone makes this sensuous, outer life permanently adorable. Robert's instinct told him of the gulf that lay between these two world's, Pauline's and Alicia's, but it was only of late that he was becoming conscious of its high reality. Since he had been with Mrs. Costello and Alicia, this consciousness had been growing at leaps and bounds. The lesson had

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really started in York Minster, and had been continued in that wonderful moment on the rim of the garden, when he had realized that the magnificent pageantry of Nature which offers itself at sunset to the one who with seeing eyes looks out over the Bay of Naples is at heart but the symbol of a spiritual vision of still more entrancing beauty. But Robert had not yet taken up his abode in this other world, this world of Alicia's. He entered it, and loved it, and then he fell asleep; and when he wakened, he was in the outer world once more, feeling its warmth and comfort, never blind to its allurements, but knowing — increasingly knowing — that his spirit was not satisfied, that it was eternally hungry. With Alicia, Robert was always awake. There was no danger of falling asleep and wakening outside the gate.

Robert looked at Alicia once more. She was busily painting. Her face had lost its dream-like immobility, but none of its distinction. Now it was all life and tenderness. Her hand moved rapidly, but not more so than the lights and shadows that chased each other across her face. Hand and face were living the same story. One might almost say that her very body was doing the same. It was motionless, but tense, and expressive of the boundless energy that welled up in Alicia from the eternal sources of life.

Robert had been watching Alicia with a new fascination. Then suddenly he looked away. It seemed to him that, quite unbidden, he had been peering through the open door of Paradise. The desire to be with Alicia always was taking possession of his soul. There came back to him the word that he had so unwittingly used, — “together,” — and in it there seemed the fulfillment of every possible

desire. Swift as the lightning, Robert knew for the first time in his life what it is truly to love. His feeling for Pauline had been at the flood both genuine and deep. But it had not been love. It had been something akin to fancy, the vain cry of a man for his mate, and it had voiced not his love, but his loneliness. This new feeling was so sacred that Robert scarcely dared to breathe it to himself. But it was triumphant, unhesitating, the great white light of an assured comradeship.

The sketch was finished. Alicia deftly tore it off the sketching-block, and held it out to Robert. "If you care for it," she said, almost shyly, "I should like to give it to you. I have tried to tell you something in it."

Robert's first impulse was to protest that Alicia was too generous, that he could not think of accepting such a gift; but in a moment a larger impulse came to him, and he accepted the sketch in the same simple spirit in which it had been offered. He knew that hereafter it would be one of the treasures of his life, and for such a boon he could only stammer, "Thank you, thank you, — *very — much.*"

Alicia and Robert walked back to the Albergo in silence. Alicia would not allow Robert to carry her sketching-outfit. It was very light, she said, and in any case an artist ought not to use what she could not carry for herself. Earlier, Robert would have insisted, but he was at heart well-bred, and of late he had been learning that it is of the essence of good manners to allow people to do as they please. Alicia was busy with her own thoughts, and Robert felt no need of speech. Just now he was in the first whirl of a great happiness. There was pathos in it, a recurrent

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minor chord, for Robert knew very well that Alicia cared nothing for him; but for the present, at least, the happiness far exceeded the pain. Like a bird singing in his heart, his love banished all else. It seemed to him a divine thing that after all his doubts and hesitation, he should love in this assured, unquestioning way. He was not conscious of any tragedy in not being loved.

When Robert got to his room, he pinned Alicia's sketch up on the wall, in what he conceived to be the best possible light. He drew up a chair in front of it and sat for some time studying the sketch. It had caught the joyous air of the morning, its freshness and sparkle. Merely as a sketch, it was good to look upon, but the hidden meaning, the special message to himself, Robert could not discover.

St. Augustine came that afternoon to give the accustomed Italian lesson. When it was over, he carried Robert off to the little church attached to the Albergo. It was a special feast day, and the vesper service, St. Augustine said, would be very fine. The church was gayly decorated, and all the men of the Tarantella had been impressed into the musical service. Shortly after Robert and St. Augustine had taken their places, Mrs. Costello and Alicia entered. Both ladies hastily drew a tiny lace handkerchief over their heads, and as they advanced towards the high altar, bowed and crossed themselves. St. Augustine observed their reverence and mistook them for Catholics. When the service began, he completely withdrew his attention from the Americans and all external things, and the visible exaltation in his face made it still more akin to that of the saint who sits, in Ary Shaffer's picture, next to the pallid Santa Monica. Robert's own



heart was divided, sometimes lost as completely as St. Augustine's in the rare beauty of the service, and sometimes oblivious of everything save Alicia. But in either worship he was serenely happy. When they came out of the little church, it was already dark. But St. Augustine would not stop for dinner. He had duties in Sorrento. As he turned to leave, he said, with his usual directness, "Your young American friend is very beautiful. I *perceive* that she is also devout. She would make an acceptable nun."

Robert said good-night rather brusquely, and disappeared into the Albergo. He had meant to walk part way to Sorrento with St. Augustine, but the priest's remark jarred upon his happy mood. It seemed to invest Alicia with an unnecessary remoteness.

During the succeeding weeks, Alicia and Robert went out sketching several times. Occasionally Mrs. Costello joined them. She did not sketch herself, but in all matters of art she was an almost unerring critic. Sometimes Robert sketched, and sometimes he simply watched Alicia, or sat quietly chatting with Mrs. Costello. Alicia always produced something admirable. It might be very simple, but it never failed to possess charm. Robert's own moods were variable, and were reflected in his work. He made one sketch that both Mrs. Costello and Alicia commended highly, and several that they praised with reservations. Quite a number were frankly and undeniably poor. The ladies dismissed these by saying that the hands could not work to any purpose when the spirit was *à la dimanche*.

It was, however, a wonderful spring for Robert. He was conscious that his spirit had gained in tranquillity and

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repose. He was well and happy. His love for Alicia steadied his whole nature. It was his anchor, the one certain, assured experience in the shifting tumult of his new life. The minor chord was always there, and when Robert allowed himself to think of the parting which the last week in April was scheduled to bring, the minor chord threatened disaster. But he seldom allowed himself to think of it. He saw as much of Alicia and Mrs. Costello as their literary engagements permitted. He himself seemed to be doing very little, and at times felt heartily ashamed of his own idleness. But in his heart he knew that he was gaining more of solid worth than all his feverish activity in Paris had been able to yield him. In addition to his love for Alicia, which seemed to him each day more wonderful, he rejoiced in the increasing depth and affection of Mrs. Costello's friendship. She no longer treated him as a stranger, but quite as one of the inner circle. She assumed as a matter of course that they would see much of Robert when they all got back to America.

It was an interesting quality in Mrs. Costello that a thought once lodged in her brain never kept its original dimensions. However large it might have been in the beginning, it always grew to something still larger. Her friends were constantly being astounded at these expansions. They hardly adjusted themselves to Mrs. Costello's original ideas before they were asked to reach out still farther. Smaller souls could not keep up the pace, and were surprised, when they looked around, to find that Mrs. Costello was no longer in sight, and that they no longer belonged to her circle. They complained that she had dropped them, when in reality they had by their own

sluggishness dropped her. But larger souls found in Mrs. Costello an astonishing tonic, and counted it a high privilege so to live that they might keep her in sight.

Robert was meeting this expansiveness in Mrs. Costello's thought world. Starting with the friendly suggestion that she must see much of Robert in Boston — which Robert felt to be a great and undeserved favor — Mrs. Costello's thought expanded in the course of a few weeks into the plan that Robert must make his home with her while he was deciding upon a profession. Robert's breath was quite taken away at the thought of such generous hospitality. He had not recovered from his surprise before Mrs. Costello had gone a step farther, and had passed on to the assumption that Robert had definitely accepted her invitation, and if he found her household agreeable, might even remain while he was following his professional studies. This lengthening vista left Robert fairly gasping. He knew that Mrs. Costello was absolutely sincere in her wonderful invitation, and he also knew that the mere idea of having such a home to go to made him fairly light-headed. But it seemed too big an invitation to be really true, and he could not quite bring himself to consider it seriously.

Meanwhile the weeks sped on, and April approached its close. Mrs. Costello and Alicia were going to London for the season, and afterwards were to make a round of visits at various English country-houses. They were to go by boat from Naples, as Mrs. Costello wanted the several quiet days at sea before the turmoil of London. Robert could hardly bring himself to think of his own plans. The loneliness of them appalled him. He was to accompany

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the ladies to Naples, and then betake himself to Florence for a month. Afterwards, he had a vague idea that he would spend the summer among the Italian lakes and in Switzerland, and then by some indefinite route turn up in Boston late in September. There was some chance that Donald would be going home then, and that they might cross together.

Robert bore himself very well during the last days at Cocumella, — days so full of beauty that they seemed almost unreal. When the Nixe rounded the Capo di Sorrento, and their little boat put out across the blue waters, there was a distinct lump in Robert's throat. The Nixe's parting whistle no longer sounded friendly. There was something threatening and cruel about it, for she was carrying him away from a place where he had been very happy.

"It was like a quiet dream, was it not?" said Mrs. Costello. "Quite unlike one's life anywhere else. I think we ought to give it a special name. What shall we call it, Mr. Pendexter, our life at Cocumella?"

"I shall think of it as our Italian parenthesis," answered Robert, promptly.

"Excellent," cried Mrs. Costello. "That's what it shall be, our Italian parenthesis; and I suppose we must say that its value, like that of all other parentheses, depends upon what goes before and what comes after."

"Yes, in the end," suggested Alicia. "But it was good just in and for itself, *non è vero?*"

Both Mrs. Costello and Robert assented, and the rest of the little voyage was made for the most part in silence.

It was a couple of days before the steamer sailed for

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London. Robert was cheerful and helpful, ready to wander with the ladies in the wonderful Museum or drive with them along the coast, or even shop with them in the excitable Via Roma. Mrs. Costello declared that Robert was invaluable, and that they should hardly know how to get on without him.

But when the parting actually came, and Robert stood on the pier bravely smiling and waving his handkerchief as the steamer slowly got under way, there came into his eyes, in spite of him, a look of such mortal pain that Alicia knew what before she had only unwillingly guessed.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ROBERT CHOOSES A PROFESSION

IT is very beautiful at Bolton in late September. At this season, there is still the air of full maturity and not yet the air of decay. Robert went out to Bolton directly from his steamer, but he went without any great enthusiasm. Since it stood to him as home, he had tried to have a dutiful regard for it. But as he looked back upon it from the vantage-ground of Europe, he saw that the life at Bolton had been starved and ugly. He had been fond of his cousins in an unemotional way, but not fond enough of them to find separation painful.

As soon as Robert arrived at the old farmhouse, however, he felt that a great change had swept over it. Bolton, with Aunt Matilda Pendexter removed, was an entirely different place. Robert remembered vaguely that the old house had good lines, and was full of possibilities. But it had seemed only half dignified and never beautiful. In spite of the enthusiasm of Priscilla's letters and Stephen's warm praise, Robert was quite unprepared for the change. It amounted in fact to a transformation. The entrance porch, designed for the love of it by Stephen's young architectural friend, was a great success. The fresh paint, the opened shutters with the pretty muslin curtains back of the immaculate windows, the improved shrubbery, all combined to give the place an air of assured distinction. Inside the house, the change was no less marked. Where Robert remembered in the past musty smells and

an all-pervading dinginess, he now found fresh air and sunshine. The new furnishings, though simple and inexpensive, showed a surprising amount of taste.

The girls had taken Robert all over the house within ten minutes of his arrival. His exclamations of genuine admiration and amazement gave them keen delight. But the best change of all was in the girls themselves. Under the more genial régime of the past year, all three of them had fairly blossomed. They had given over the idea of conciliating Mrs. Perkins, and allowed her to be audibly scandalized. The girls looked better, they were dressed distinctly better, and they seemed happy. Robert had expected all this in Priscilla, — Stephen's devotion was quite enough to account for it, — but he had not imagined that the mere absence of daily petty tyranny on the part of a domineering old woman, and the simple right to do as they pleased in the small affairs of life, could have worked such change in Martha and Mattie.

Robert was much touched, too, by the warmth of his own reception. He felt that he deserved little of the girls. He had been too ill when he went away to come out and tell them good-by. He had sent them very infrequent letters from Europe. He had gobbled up the major part of their aunt's property. This had been involuntary, it is true, and because his aunt had so willed, but in the retrospect it seemed to Robert scarcely less hateful than if it had been of his own volition. He had given them small share in his thoughts and plans. But the girls were sublimely unconscious of all this. Their one thought was that Robert was well again, and that he was once more at home. It was this unconsciousness of any neglect or

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wrong-doing that touched Robert even more keenly than their hearty welcome.

Every direction that Robert turned, he found some provision for his comfort. Under Aunt Matilda, his room had always been the small one over the kitchen. He had hated it even as a boy. He could not know that the poor lady had given it to him because it was always warm of a morning. Being herself quite insensible to beauty, she could not guess that the dingy ugliness of the little room had oppressed a growing boy and weighed even more heavily upon the man. Aunt Matilda would have been shocked at the bare thought of putting Robert in the big spare room over the parlor when he came up from Boston to spend an occasional Sunday or holiday, but she would nevertheless have done it, grimly and ungraciously enough, perhaps, but still have done it, could she have known. It is one of the little tragedies of daily life that people can only see *what* they can see.

Now, however, Robert was taken to the spare room quite as a matter of course, and when he laughingly protested, he was given to understand that the room had been renovated especially in his honor. Mattie had already christened it the modern fatted calf, a little joke that Mrs. Perkins failed to appreciate.

Stephen had met Robert at the steamer and had brought him out to Bolton, — the same Stephen as of old, a trifle balder, a trifle stouter, than the year before, but as delightfully friendly, and radiating happiness and goodwill from every pore. Donald was still in Berlin, studying German literature and the grand opera. He had gone in for a second year of Europe. Robert was curious to know how



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he got it. Stephen laughed, and said in his old confidential way, "Well, if you must know, the poet got it the way he gets most things, — he just reached out and took it! And by Jove, it's not a half bad way of doing, either. It's the way I got you for a cousin, little Pen."

Robert pressed his hand and answered very genuinely, "Dear Stephen, it *is* so good to be with you again!"

Had it not been for Stephen, Robert would have felt a little lonely. Stephen managed to get out to Bolton a surprising number of times, for he was only too glad of an excuse for such holiday-making, yet in spite of all this kindness, Robert had his difficult moments. The happiness of loving Alicia was always his, but as this became an accustomed and assured possession, he grew increasingly conscious of the pain of separation. The hopelessness of his love was also beginning to press in upon him. At first he had asked only the boon of loving, but now he asked the greater boon of being loved. Seeing Stephen and Priscilla together nearly every day added nothing to Robert's distress. Sweet and wholesome as their courtship was, and so frankly in evidence every minute they were together, it never occurred to Robert to compare this pretty love-making with his own feeling for Alicia. Nor did it ever occur to him to compare Alicia to any other woman. He admitted that Mrs. Costello belonged in the same class, but Alicia the individual stood quite alone, a goddess whose devout worshiper Robert unfalteringly was.

Robert was often restless and ill at ease, but he hid it so completely that his cousins were charmed with his manners and talk. He was glad of their frank approval, even though he knew that they were easily pleased. He

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had come home meaning to be very nice to them, and the task was so much easier than he had pictured it that his spirits had undergone a certain buoyancy. One morning in the middle of his second week at Bolton, the mail brought a welcome letter from Mrs. Costello. Robert knew that she was again in America, and that she had been spending some time with friends in Maine. Now, however, she wrote that she was once more established in Boston, and begged that Robert would dine with her the following evening and stop overnight. Robert was delighted to accept the invitation, and went in town very promptly the following afternoon.

Mrs. Costello's house is sufficiently in the suburbs to have a garden of its own. It stands with its back to the street, a little uncivilly, perhaps, but when one follows the winding path around the house, and comes upon the open door facing the garden and the sun, one feels that the arrangement is more than justified, and one marvels that every other householder has not essayed a similar excellence. Robert had never been there before. Dinner was to be at six, but Mrs. Costello had asked that he would come early. It was still full daylight when he presented himself. His heart was beating painfully. He did not know whether he should see Alicia or not, but at any rate he would have news of her, and he would be breathing again the high atmosphere that had made Cocumella an earthly paradise. As soon as he entered the narrow gateway he felt that, like the house itself, he had turned his back upon the commonplace, and once more stood upon enchanted ground. The door was wide open. Robert knew that his hostess would like him to enter without knock or bell-

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stroke and announce himself. But something of the old conventionality restrained him, and instead, he pressed the electric button. In a moment he heard the unmistakable voice with its high-pitched music. "Never mind, Katie, I will go to the door. I think it must be Mr. Pendexter."

When Mrs. Costello reached the door, Robert flushed with pleasure. "Mrs. Costello!" he cried, as if that one word covered all possible salutation.

Mrs. Costello held out her hand. "Welcome, dear friend," she said, smiling. Then she covered his big hand with her two small ones, and made him feel how very welcome he was. They were standing in a large vestibule that opened directly on the level of the garden. "Put your suit-case down here," Mrs. Costello continued, "and Katie will take it up to your room. It will be quite safe to hang your coat and hat here on the rack. We seem quite exposed, with our open door, but really we are well protected."

Mrs. Costello led the way up a short stairway that faced the entrance, and waited for Robert on the small landing that served in lieu of a hall. Then she turned into the big drawing-room on the left, and once more waited until Robert stood alongside of her. It was a little thing, this waiting for him at each turn, but it expressed a friendliness and welcome that no mere words could have done.

When Robert got well inside the drawing-room, he paused and looked around him. "How beautiful it is!" he exclaimed. "I have never been in such a beautiful room before."

"I am so glad you care for it," said Mrs. Costello. "When my parents were building the house, they allowed

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me the privilege of planning it, and so I am always pleased when my friends care for it."

It was a long room, at least forty feet long, undivided except by the heavy carved beam in the ceiling, which suggested rather than insisted upon a division. In spite of its unbroken length, the room was not monotonous, for by a very clever arrangement, it was of unequal width. In the portion where Mrs. Costello and Robert were standing, the room extended for several feet into the side garden. In the other portion, where the large fireplace was, the room extended several feet to the right, and so joined the large dining-room on the opposite side of the house. It was as if two squares had been placed side by side, and then, to relieve the monotony, had been shoved so that the common sides no longer coincided. It made a unique room, and one full of interest. The whole was finished in teak-wood, elaborately carved and carefully polished.

"Where *did* you get such wonderful carving?" asked Robert, going up to it and running his long fingers appreciatively over the tracery, as if to see it by touch as well as by sight.

"It is wonderful, is it not? It was done for me in India, and in a surprisingly short space of time. The designs were sent over by the architect in the spring, and in the autumn the work was all here and ready to be put in place."

Mrs. Costello moved towards the fireplace, so that Robert might see the rest of the room. He followed her very slowly, entranced not only with the carving, but also with the subtle proportions of the room.

"This is the dining-room," said Mrs. Costello, leading

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the way through the wide folding doors. It was separated from the drawing-room by a wooden screen, partly solid and partly delicate lattice work filled in with glass. Curtains of soft green silk hung back of the glass and gave a suggestion of shrubbery. From the dining-room Mrs. Costello led the way through another folding-door into a study which faced south on the garden.

Robert paused and drew a deep breath of satisfaction. "It is as beautiful as Italy!" he exclaimed.

"I like to hear you say that," answered Mrs. Costello. "You know that my husband was an Italian. Everything in this room came from Italy. It was Léon Costello's study." Mrs. Costello nearly always spoke of her husband by his full name. It seemed the better to voice her own deep appreciation of him as an artist. By this time she and Robert had come out again on the landing and the circuit was complete. "You see we have no hall. I deliberately sacrificed it, so that we might have this unbroken sweep of rooms. You don't think I did wrong, do you?"

Robert was amused at this deference to his opinion about a thing that had been done so many years before, but the appeal was genuine, and he answered with equal earnestness, "I think that you could not possibly have done better. It was a stroke of genius!"

"Oh, hardly that," said Mrs. Costello. "And now I must send you to your room, or you'll not be dressed for dinner in time. Katie will show you up, and you must tell her if there's anything wanting."

Robert followed the maid upstairs, but he went very slowly, for he wanted to examine every detail of this unique house. A half-flight brought him to a landing extending

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over the vestibule and lighted by a cheery little bay window above the front door. In reality, the landing was a small apartment in itself. It looked down into the drawing-room on one side, and through a latticed window on the other side into the Italian study.

Mrs. Costello called up from the drawing-room, "That's our box of honor, you see, when we have music down here."

And Robert answered gayly, "I should like a seat in the front row, please."

Another half-flight brought him to the hallway in the second floor, and a few steps more to his own large, sunny room overlooking the garden. A little wood fire crackled on the hearth; a bunch of flowers stood on the table; stationery and stamps were conveniently grouped on the open desk; a bath robe was thrown over the foot of the bed; at every turn Robert met some fresh expression of welcome. He had been living so long in the impersonal life of hotels and *pensions*, with all its indifference and half comfort, that he was much touched, as he had been at Bolton, by this intimate concern for his welfare.

Katie was still standing at the door. "If you please, sir," she said, when Robert finally turned around, "Mrs. Costello wanted me to tell you that the bathroom at the end of the hall is for you. I'll show it to you, sir, if you like."

As Robert was returning from this tour of inspection, he met Mrs. Costello at the stairs.

"You will think that I was not a very good architect," she said, "to put the bathrooms so far from the bedrooms. But I had to yield that point. A quarter of a century ago, you know, it was thought that bathrooms must be as near the kitchen range as possible, so as to save piping. Appar-

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ently, they did not reflect that you lay pipes once in many years, while you draw the water every day. It was a stupid economy, but I suppose we are doing just as dull things to-day, only in some other direction. Do let Katie know if you need anything."

Mrs. Costello went on to her own apartments in the third floor, and Robert quickly dressed for dinner. It was not yet six, so he drew an armchair up before the fire, and sat there enjoying its warmth and comfort. He had never been in the house before, he had not yet taken a meal there, but already he felt at home as he had never felt at home anywhere else.

When Robert went downstairs, darkness had fallen, and the big drawing-room was lighted up, not brilliantly, but just enough to keep it from being gloomy and to allow the firelight to show to advantage.

Mrs. Costello rose as Robert entered, and once more took his hand. "I am so glad to have you here, Mr. Pendexter," she said, in her silvery, high-pitched voice. "I do hope that you will feel quite at home." Robert protested that he felt surprisingly at home. "We will have dinner directly, as soon as my friend, Mrs. Mason, comes down. Won't you take that armchair at the side of the fireplace. I think we shall have to call that *your* chair."

It was a curious old chair, covered with leather and very comfortable. Robert sank into it contentedly, and chatted with Mrs. Costello quite as if the Italian parenthesis had ended but yesterday. In a few moments Mrs. Mason joined them. Robert easily guessed that she was Mrs. Costello's companion and secretary. Like Mrs. Costello, she was in evening dress. She greeted them both with a brilliant

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smile. Mrs. Costello treated Mrs. Mason with the same thoughtful courtesy that she had shown to Robert.

It was a pleasant little dinner-party. The food was very simple, and was served quite faultlessly. The room itself was beautiful, and the table prettily lighted with four shaded wax candles. The atmosphere was one in which Robert felt perfectly at home. Had Alicia been there, he would have considered himself entirely happy. As yet Mrs. Costello had not spoken of her. Robert was keenly anxious for news, but some stubborn reticence made it difficult for him to mention Alicia.

After dinner, Robert asked if he might once more make the tour of the rooms, as he would like to see them at night. Mrs. Costello gladly joined him. For some reason she evidently wanted him to take special notice of the house. She listened to all his comments with an attention which he hardly felt they deserved. This second tour deepened Robert's earlier impressions, and disclosed a number of features which were missed before. Behind the arm-chair that Mrs. Costello had designated as his there was a small curtained opening. The curtain was now half drawn, and a soft, warm light shone into the drawing-room. Robert asked if he might enter. He found himself in a tiny octagonal chapel. An ancient prie-dieu stood in the centre. On the wall opposite was a Lucca della Robbia Mother and Child. To one side there stood a carved Calvary. Set into the wall over the tiny fireplace was a Donatello Madonna in ivory plaster. On a pedestal in one of the angles rested a delicate reproduction of the great bronze Buddha at Kamakura. On the walls were pictures of the Kali Temple on the Ganges above Calcutta, and of the sacred



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Buddhist sanctuary at Buddh-Gaya. Robert noticed that the heavy teak-wood book-shelf contained not only the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, the Imitation and the Mirror of Perfection, but also the Bhagavad-Gîtâ, the Koran, and the Laws of Confucius. An ancient silver lamp, evidently from some Italian church, hung from the centre of the room, and cast the warm reddish glow over the chapel that had first attracted Robert's attention.

Robert had been brought up in a church which dispenses with symbols. Such religious life as he had known had been of a severely intellectual type. He had never acquired the habit of regular prayer. He prayed, it is true, more frequently, perhaps, than most men pray, but without any outer sign. He seldom knelt. He prayed as he walked the streets, as he sat at his desk, — most of all, at night as he lay in bed, tossed about by all the storms of hesitation and uncertainty. Sometimes he had doubted whether there be a God, for he had prayed so entreatingly for light, and apparently the light had not come. But this little chapel affected him strangely. It was a visible invitation to prayer. Robert would have liked to kneel at the ancient prie-dieu and pray for Alicia, not indeed that she might be his, but solely that it might be well with her, and always well with her. He was too shy to kneel before Mrs. Costello, and contented himself with breathing such a prayer. Then he turned to Mrs. Costello and asked, "Is this gem your private oratory?"

"In a sense yes, since I sometimes use it. But in reality it belongs more to Miss Frothingham than to me. She perhaps cares more than I do for these symbols of faith. My own oratory is upstairs. It is much larger and simpler

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than this. In fact, it is the room in which I live. Some time you shall see it."

It was Alicia's chapel in which he had wanted to pray for her! Suddenly Robert remembered the unwelcome words of St. Augustine,—"I *perceive* that she is also devout. She would make an acceptable nun,"—and turned to Mrs. Costello almost in alarm. "Is Miss Frothingham a Catholic?" he asked.

"She is not a member of that church," Mrs. Costello answered. "Like myself, she is a world-religionist, a worshiper of the Spirit. She is a Christian, but her Christianity is racial rather than specific. She is both Catholic and Protestant. In the far East, she is Hindu, Buddhist, Shintoist, Mahometan. We believe, you see, that religion is many in form, but one in substance. To us it means the outreaching of the human spirit towards the Divine Spirit. Alicia is a beautiful soul; she has traveled far on the Path."

"Does Miss Frothingham soon return to America?" asked Robert, as they left the chapel and moved down the long drawing-room.

"I hardly know," Mrs. Costello answered. "She is still in England, and it seems difficult for her to get away. She is much sought after, you know, and one invitation succeeds another. I think I shall have to send her some wax to stuff in her ears. But there is a chance that she may sail about the first of the month."

They had come to the end of the room, and found themselves in front of a marble portrait-bust that stood near the grand piano. Robert examined it critically. It was a noble face, crowned with abundant, ungovernable hair. The throat

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was strong and bare. The head rose from out the folds of a very simple drapery that stretched from shoulder to shoulder.

"I think I know whose it is," said Robert, gently.

"Yes, it is Léon Costello, and an excellent likeness."

"Is it something new?" Robert asked, running his long fingers over the modeling of the throat, as he had done earlier in the afternoon over the wooden traceries.

Mrs. Costello winced inwardly, for she never allowed any one but herself to touch the bust. "No," she answered. "Like everything else in the house, it is quite old, at least a quarter of a century. But why did you ask, — is it the still fresh tone of the marble?"

"Perhaps that in part," said Robert. "But still more, I think, because it does n't *look* old-fashioned. You don't mind my saying that, do you? It looks as if it might have been made yesterday."

Mrs. Costello gave Robert one of her rarest smiles. "I am delighted to have you say it. That was the effect I wanted to produce."

"Did you make the bust *yourself*?" asked Robert, in astonishment.

"No, indeed. I only posed Léon Costello. When you come to know me better, dear Mr. Pendexter, you will find out that I really do nothing at all myself. I am one of those idle, non-executive people, who say how it ought to be done, but who let other people do all the work!"

"I think yours is the larger service," said Robert. "It is harder to know *what* to do than it is to do it."

"Sometimes, perhaps," admitted Mrs. Costello. "But I am wondering if you can go a step farther still, and tell

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me why this bust of Léon Costello does not look old-fashioned, and why I may venture to hope that it never will?" Mrs. Costello watched Robert expectantly, and seemed to attach importance to his answer.

Robert looked at the bust carefully and answered with much confidence, "Certainly I can tell you. It is because there's nothing either fashionable or unfashionable about bare throats and simple drapery. If you had shown any article of clothing, a coat or waistcoat or necktie, it would have had to be of the period, and as the period passes, the things sooner or later would have looked poky and out of date."

Mrs. Costello smiled pleasantly. "That was quite my own analysis. It is astonishing that so obvious a principle is not more frequently followed,—I mean in buildings and books as well as in pictures and busts. And now shall we go and sit by the fire? Would you mind telling Katie to bring a little fresh kindling?"

When Robert returned, he found Mrs. Costello settled in a low chair at one side of the fireplace and busy with some knitting. Robert dropped easily into the leather chair on the opposite side.

"You won't mind my knitting, will you?" asked Mrs. Costello. "I always like to have some occupation for my hands when I am sitting still. We can chat for a while, and then perhaps later you or Mrs. Mason will read aloud for a few minutes. But first I must ask you how you like your room?"

Robert answered that he liked it extremely, and added that no one could help liking it.

"It used to be my mother's room, and always seemed

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to me especially bright and attractive. I am so glad that you like it, for that is the room I am going to give you when you come to stay with us. You need not be afraid to come, for we will let you much alone. I know what it is to be a worker, and I feel always that I want to protect them from interruptions. I shall make over the Italian room to you for a study, — I do my own work upstairs. Katie can take your breakfast-tray in there of a morning, and then you need n't see any of the household until luncheon. The bedroom needs redecorating. It never quite suited me. The men are coming to-morrow to do it over. If you have any preference in the way of a color scheme, I should be so glad to follow it." Mrs. Costello made this extraordinary offer with the utmost simplicity, quite as one might ask whether a guest would have his eggs hard or soft.

Robert looked at Mrs. Costello in a dazed, incredulous way. He had quite forgotten until that moment that at Cocumella Mrs. Costello had asked him to be her guest. He had never doubted her sincerity, but the invitation had seemed too big even to consider. Now he had to face it squarely. Of his desire in the matter, he had not the slightest doubt. Of all things in the world, he would like to become a member of this enchanted household. But he could not bring himself to accept so much. His conscience rebelled at the magnitude of the favor.

Robert hastened to assure Mrs. Costello of his appreciation of her great kindness, and of how much — how *very* much — he would *like* to accept, but that really he could n't say yes to so tremendous an invitation.

Mrs. Costello did not coax him. It would not have been characteristic of her. She only wanted Robert as a guest

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in case he could come willingly. When she was sure, however, that he really wanted to come, and was only hindered by the old New England prejudice against accepting something for which he could not make visible payment, she patiently went to work, and one by one broke down every objection. She said very graciously that it would steady them all to have a worker in the house, and that his coming would be quite as much a favor to them as to him.

In spite of all Mrs. Costello's beautiful patience and graciousness, it was very late that evening before Robert could bring himself definitely to accept her proffered hospitality. One might have thought that he was trying to make up his mind to do something that he did n't want to do. It was the New England blood at an old and favorite task, — the task of trying to make a thing seem wrong simply because one wanted it. Robert drew the line at selecting the decoration for his bedroom. He was sure that anything Mrs. Costello might choose would be highly acceptable to him. It was perhaps this minor abstinence that helped him to allow the greater gift. Robert was not yet so large as Mrs. Costello in his mental outlook, and could not act in the same large way.

He had so far succeeded in being nice to his cousins at Bolton that they very genuinely joined Stephen in his outcry against Robert's desertion. Robert himself felt a little conscience-smitten at leaving, but he was going as a student and there was nothing else to be done. Had it not been Mrs. Costello's, it would have been a boarding-house or an apartment hotel. He promised, of course, to return in a few weeks for Priscilla's wedding.

Several days later, Robert's trunks arrived at Mrs. Cos-

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tello's, and that same afternoon he himself stood once more at the open door. Katie showed him to his room. They would not dine until half after six, she said, as there would be guests. When Robert went downstairs, the company had all assembled. Mrs. Costello greeted him warmly, and at dinner gave him the place of honor at her right hand. Later in the evening, after the guests had all gone, Robert and Mrs. Costello lingered a few moments before the fire to have a friendly chat before separating for the night.

"When you have decided upon your profession, Mr. Pendexter, I may perhaps be able to help you with some introductions. You will let me know, won't you? and allow me to serve you in any way I can."

It was the first time that Mrs. Costello had referred to the impending choice of a profession. Robert felt that she had had it much in mind, and of late he himself had scarcely thought of anything else. He thanked her heartily, and said that he would be only too glad to avail himself of her kindness.

There was a pause, and both Mrs. Costello and Robert sat looking into the fire. Mrs. Costello made a motion as if to rise, but Robert detained her with a question. "What do you do, Mrs. Costello, when you have an important decision to make, and all the data at hand for making it, but every time you set to work, you are quite baffled by some stubborn little obstacles? They have nothing to do with the decision, they are not nearly so important as it is, but at every turn they squarely block the road, and keep you fretting in uncertainty."

Mrs. Costello settled back in her chair. "I know so well what you mean, dear friend. When I was younger, I

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used always to defy these obstacles. I used to climb over them, or force my way around them, — do anything, in short, except to remove them. I felt, as perhaps you feel, that the greater thing must be attended to first, and that afterwards one could settle with these little perplexities. I think I made a great many mistakes in that way. My mind was not free, and I could not reach the best decisions. They were like clouds in the atmosphere, and I could not see.”

“And what do you do now?” asked Robert.

“Now, I first annihilate the obstacle. With me, it is generally some omitted duty. It may be very trivial, but it pulls at my spirit. Sometimes I do not even know what it is. I merely feel a vague sense of dissatisfaction, and I am incapable of my best thinking. I once said to a dear friend of mine, a distinguished psychologist, that I thought life would be very easy if it were not for the decisions.”

Robert laughed and said, “That is precisely what I feel. Did your friend help you out of the difficulty?”

“Yes, in a quite wonderful way. He showed me that the decisions themselves are not difficult. Every real problem, he used to say, carries its own answer very near the surface. The practical difficulty is to get rid of the psychological rubbish that covers it up. He had a method for doing this that I have never known to fail. It is surprisingly simple. Whenever you feel this vague disquiet, turn upon yourself abruptly, and say in a tone of quite military command, ‘Face it!’ The subliminal self is really servile. It will thrust over the threshold of consciousness the thing that has been bothering you, and then you can dispose of it at once. After that, when all such rubbish is



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gone, all such psychological rubbish, as my friend calls it, the decision practically makes itself. I have come to agree with my friend that the answers to the *real* problems of life are very near the surface."

Robert rose. "Thank you," he said, "and good-night, for I know that you must be tired and ought to be going to bed."

"Yes, I ought to be going up. Perhaps you will be kind enough to put out the lights when you are ready to go up yourself. I have sent Katie to bed."

"Certainly," said Robert. "Good-night."

Robert sat for a few minutes before the fire. Then he got up and put out the lights in the drawing-room. He crossed the landing to the Italian room and looked around him with a pleasant sense of possession. It was to be his, and here he was to work and think. A curious, canopied fireplace occupied one corner of the room. It suggested many a pleasant fire. A long bench stretched along one side of the room. A narrow shelf extended out a few inches from the top of the high back, and gave support to a number of unframed photographs. Robert looked at them with interest. They all represented famous buildings. A lighted lamp still stood on the writing-table.

Robert dropped into the armchair in front of the table, and sat there with closed eyes. "Face it!" he said sternly. One by one the little obstacles to freedom forced themselves over the threshold of consciousness, and one by one Robert disposed of them. They were small matters, — omitted duties of no great dimensions, good plans made bad by not being carried out, little meannesses of the spirit. As they passed in review before him, Robert hated himself

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for not having disposed of them long before. He began by writing three letters, one to Pauline, one to Dennis Sullivan, and one to Stephen.

Robert had never written to Pauline, save the little note in Paris when he first got there, and that notable letter at York which happily had never been sent. His present letter was friendly, but not in any way emotional. He wrote to express the hope that their affairs had been arranged to her satisfaction, and that she herself was well and happy. He was shockingly late in making amends for what now seemed to him an almost unpardonable neglect, but he had the good sense not to apologize.

The note to Dennis Sullivan asked if he would call the following evening and talk over his plans. It hinted that Robert would like to help them on.

Robert's letter to Stephen was to carry out an old plan that had been good at the start, but had grown poor by omission. The letter ran: —

DEAR STEPHEN:— I think you know something about my affairs, and I want your help in straightening them out. My aunt, as you know, left me the bulk of her property. It brings me a trifle over six thousand a year. She left my cousins only one thousand apiece and the old house. At the time of her death I was too ill, and also too morally blind, to realize the injustice of this arrangement. I know better now, and I propose to mend it. I shall be at your office to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock sharp, and I shall expect you to be prepared with such papers and other tiresome red-tape as may be necessary to redistribute my aunt's property so that each of the girls may have a couple

## ROBERT CHOOSES A PROFESSION

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of thousand a year. Even now, as you see, I retain a thousand more than I give them. I do this because they have the house, and because I have a growing suspicion — which promises to become a dead certainty! — that women can make money go farther than men can. You may hesitate to act in this matter because it affects Priscilla's interests and so touches you. But you've got to do it, dear Stephen, for if you don't, I shall go to some other lawyer, and he might not do it right!

Remember, — three o'clock sharp.

Yours ever,

R. P.

From these rather obvious duties Robert passed to the more intangible and subtle matters of the spirit, matters which could not be disposed of by pen and paper, but about which he could make definite plans of action. True to his old methodical habits, he drew up a list, and against each accusing entry set down the proposed restitution. It was a curious and, in spite of some absurdities, a touching list. The clock had gone well beyond midnight when Robert's final command — "Face it!" — brought the honest answer that there was nothing to face.

Robert's heart was still a bit heavy, but his mind and conscience at least were free. He had cleared away the psychological rubbish, and could look the matter of his future profession quite squarely in the face. He went up to bed in buoyant spirits, knowing that in the morning his decision would have been made.

Mrs. Costello always had her breakfast-tray sent to her room. As Robert came downstairs the following morning,

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he met Katie just taking up the tray. He detained her a moment in order to send a little note to Mrs. Costello. It simply read : —

DEAR FRIEND : — I have come to a decision. I shall be an architect.

Robert waited a little impatiently for Katie to return. He knew that she would bring him an answering note. In the meantime he walked up and down the Italian room, and examined the various articles that adorned it. His eye wandered once more to the photographs on the shelf over the settle. He felt quite sure that they had not been there at the time of his first visit. It seemed an odd coincidence that they all had to do with his newly chosen art. Then he laughed softly, for it dawned upon him that Mrs. Costello had placed them there with a purpose. When Katie came downstairs, she brought him the expected note : —

I knew what your choice would be, dear Mr. Pendexter, and I thoroughly approve. Here is a motto for you, — from Keats, — “ I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.”

## CHAPTER XX

### THE NAKED HORSEMAN

DURING the next three weeks, life at Mrs. Costello's easily settled into a pleasant routine. The feeling of being at home which had come to Robert the first time he entered the house had so far deepened that now it seemed as if he must have lived there always. He had found his natural atmosphere. He felt that, in some subtle way which he did not understand, Mrs. Costello was supporting him by her calmness and poise; and he also felt by an equally sure instinct that he might properly allow this service, since it entailed no burden upon her.

After talking the matter over at some length with both Mrs. Costello and Stephen, Robert had decided not to undertake college, and for the present, at least, not even to enter at the Institute. He was a little old for either of these disciplines, and both his friends felt, without phrasing it in quite the same way, that Robert's temperament was in a high degree intuitional, and that whatever he got in the matter of preparation for the new profession would have to be gained outside the regular official channels. By the help of Mrs. Costello's introduction, and somewhat on the evidence of his sketches, Robert found place in one of the good architects' offices in Boston. As an unusual favor, he was allowed to work in the office only in the mornings and to have his afternoons to himself. Mrs. Costello had stipulated for this half-time arrangement, and perhaps no one else but just Mrs. Costello

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could have got it. She quite realized that Robert was not strong, and also that, in spite of his intuitional powers, he was nevertheless as yet a very ignorant young person. He needed the free afternoons for vigorous study and reading. Mrs. Costello had a large belief in Robert's natural powers, for he had met so many unaccustomed circumstances with really marked success. But she had also a tonic belief in the value of expert training. She was quite resolved that, so far as her own influence went, it should be exerted to bring into Robert's life the broadest possible culture. It was the easier for her to do this because of Robert's unbounded confidence in her judgment, and still more, perhaps, because of the almost filial devotion that he was coming to have for her.

Mrs. Costello encouraged Robert to read not only in the direction of his chosen art, but also far afield in the stricter literature of the humanities. For the same reason she begged him to write as well as to sketch, since each form of expression would help the other. Robert was somewhat aghast at the idea of writing, for aside from occasional letters, he had not written a word since he had left the high school, and his efforts there had confessedly been the most platitudinous sort of compositions, the labored restatement of what everybody knew in the beginning.

Mrs. Costello's interest in Robert began with her half knowledge of those several experiences of his when he had escaped from his smaller conditioned self and had become momentarily identified with the larger aspect of being. Mrs. Costello herself could pass into this state at will. It was indeed the habitual atmosphere in which she

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lived. It accounted for the impersonal character of her life, and the almost faultless quality of her charity. But she had gained this power only as the fruit of a tremendous novitiate. For years she had trained herself by ceaseless discipline. It was only now, when she was approaching sixty, that she had come into any large degree of realization. As she well knew, the power with Robert was unconscious and occasional. But that such an experience should be his in any measure whatever without the discipline of a severe training indicated an unusual and choice nature.

Mrs. Costello did not seek to pry into Robert's experiences, much as they interested her. But with such tact that her purpose was wholly hidden, she did encourage him to develop the superconscious. She loaned him books which dealt with the more spiritual aspects of psychology, and when he was at a loss for topics in his practice-writing, she suggested that it might be well for him to try purely imaginative writing, and to deal with possible inner experiences. She felt almost guilty when Robert promptly accepted her suggestion, and asked if he might not submit some of his papers to her for criticism. Mrs. Costello had not foreseen this result. She had no intention of gaining entrance to his soul by stealth where she would have scorned to force her way openly. Yet she could not well refuse so simple a request. She smiled and said that while she could wish him a more expert critic, he could hardly hope to find a more interested one.

It was now early in November. The day chosen for Stephen and Priscilla's wedding was at hand. Robert was to be best man, and though the ceremony was not to be

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until noon, he had yielded to Priscilla's urgent invitation to go out to Bolton the preceding afternoon. Mrs. Costello had sent her regrets. She felt a genuine interest in Stephen, and she liked what she had seen of Priscilla on the one occasion when the young people had dined with Robert and herself. But Mrs. Costello felt that her presence at Bolton might be more of an embarrassment to the sisters than a help, and especially as the house would probably be over-full as it was. So she contented herself with sending a friendly note to Stephen, and a simple, well-chosen gift to Priscilla.

Robert told Mrs. Costello good-by directly after luncheon. He would be back, he said, on the following afternoon, probably in time for five o'clock tea. An hour or so later, when Mrs. Costello was in her living-room at the top of the house,—her oratory, as she had named it to Robert,—she was surprised to hear his voice at the bottom of the staircase, asking if he might come up.

"Certainly; do come up, please," answered Mrs. Costello, and went into the hallway to meet him. Robert had been in the oratory a couple of times before, and it always seemed to him holy ground, so completely was it saturated with the atmosphere of a good life. Mrs. Costello gave up the second floor of her house to her guests, and retained the top floor for herself. The sloping roof and low ceiling gave it an air of homely comfort. The living-room or oratory occupied nearly the entire floor, stretching across the south front of the house, and having windows on three sides. The walls were tinted a quiet gray. There were very few pictures, and the furniture was of the simplest. The floor was bare except for two



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small rugs in front of the writing-table and the couch. Yet there was an air of luxuriousness about the room. This was due in part to the large free spaces, and in part to the generous open windows which just now let in a flood of sunshine, and from which one could look out over the treetops in the garden and see the winding Charles, and the distant Milton hills.

Robert was ready to start on his journey. He carried a folded manuscript. "I told you good-by once," he said, in explanation of his reappearance, "but now that I'm really off, I wanted to say good-by again and to leave this paper with you. Don't read it until to-morrow, please. It's one of my practice pieces, you know, and will do just as well when you're not so busy. It's horribly selfish of me, is n't it? but I don't want to go to Bolton a little bit. It's so nice to be settled once more, that I should just like to forget that there are such things as railroad trains."

Mrs. Costello smiled, but she was inwardly rather perplexed. Robert's coming to tell her good-by a second time was evidently a matter of impulse, and she thought nothing of it; but his not wanting to go to the wedding seemed undeniably strange. There was no possible excuse for Robert's staying at home, so Mrs. Costello said cheerily, "It will do you good to see some young people. My only fear is that when you get out to Bolton again, you won't want to come back!"

Robert laughed. "I think you know just how much danger there is of that. I shall be back the first possible moment."

Robert shook hands again with odd earnestness and

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was gone. Mrs. Costello looked at the manuscript curiously. She wanted to read it then and there, but Robert had said not until the morrow.

Robert's depression was inexplicable, even to himself. It soon passed away, however, for motion always helped to restore his good spirits. At Hudson, Stephen and Priscilla met him and drove him over to Bolton. Their own happiness and the pleasant sting of the November air were enough to cheer any one. There were only three other guests at the house, — Stephen's mother and sister, and a Pendexter cousin who lived at some distance. Robert threw himself into the spirit of the occasion with great goodwill. They had seldom known him so lively and so full of anecdote.

When Robert went to bed that night, he had the satisfaction of feeling that he had added to the happiness of Priscilla's last evening of girlhood. But Robert could not sleep. He was not restless. He lay as quiet as if he had been sound asleep, but his mind was curiously awake. His thoughts covered a wide range, but always they came back to the one theme, to Alicia. He wondered how he would feel if to-morrow it were he and Alicia who were to be married, instead of Stephen and Priscilla. At first the thought brought with it a flood of tantalizing happiness, but to his surprise, the longing for Alicia gave speedy place to new considerations. He had never really expected to marry Alicia, but now he felt how impossible it was, and how wrong of him even to wish it. It seemed to Robert that his thought grew piercingly clear, as if he were out on a still, cold, violet night, when the light of the stars penetrated the ether like thrusts of steel. No atmosphere

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of light-touched mists kept him from seeing the bare truth. And the bare truth was that he was not worthy of Alicia. This would have been a dreary conclusion after so many storms, so much heartburn, had it not been for the small voice that kept saying in his spirit, "Not now, — not yet, — but some time." And the small voice brought with it infinite hope. He could at least work to make himself worthy of Alicia. That was an enterprise that was worth while if it took the rest of life, even if he had to labor beyond the grave in that school of which we have no news.

Robert's thoughts had seldom gone so far into the future. He had thought of death, with the majority, as a disagreeable interruption to one's plans, as the end of all immediate hope. And the church in which he had been brought up, in its splendid effort to do full justice to this life, had omitted to give any substantiality to his hopes of that other life. But to-night, with all the radiance of a great illumination, there came the larger thought of death, not as an end, but as a beginning; not as something to be dreaded, but as something, when the time came, to be gently welcomed. Off from Robert's soul forever rolled the possible thought of defeat. There might be minor defeats, disappointments, retardations, but in the whole scheme of things, he could find no ultimate defeat. The forces at work on the soul might be small and slow, or tremendous and rapid, but in either case they carried the unescapable seed of victory, for they carried with them infinite time. Into Robert's heart there came an almost suffocating sense of illimitable wealth. He might ask what he would, — knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, love,

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— and the gods themselves could not gainsay his quest. Lying there in the dark, Robert felt the divine touch of the Spirit. He knew that for him the night was passing, the night of defeat and doubt, and that ahead he could already see the radiance of a great light.

Robert fell asleep, and rested peacefully until well into the morning. He was only awakened when Stephen burst into his room to remind him that it was no ordinary day, but his and Priscilla's wedding morning, and that the best man must be up and doing. It was not difficult for Robert to take a kindly part in the mixed solemnity and merry-making of the wedding, for he meant to be very nice to his cousins and to help them make the great event a success. But in spite of himself, he moved like one in a dream. Everything had about it a slight touch of unreality. The experience of the night before was still strong upon him. He had the feeling that this was not his proper world. He had not been for a long time in such a crowd of alien people. Most of them were strangers, or, more difficult still, persons whom he had formerly known and had not seen for many months. Some of the more discerning critics regarded Robert's manners as too formal, and put it down to the constraining influence of Europe, but none could find specific fault. Stephen and Priscilla were too blissfully happy to notice Robert's abstraction; and Martha and Mattie were much too busy.

It was with an undeniable sense of relief that Robert saw the wedding-journeymen drive off to Lancaster to catch a south-bound train, and felt free himself to look up his own train for Boston. Mattie drove him over to Hudson. Robert settled himself in the last car, as that happened to

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be the least crowded. He had looked forward to this moment when the whole affair would be quite over, and he himself on the way back to Mrs. Costello's. But he could not shake off the feeling that he was still in a dream, and that all the noise and bustle around him were wholly unimportant, as he should presently waken. Even the stopping of the train in obedience to a danger signal at Baker's Bridge filled him with no impatience. At least twenty minutes passed. No one seemed to know the cause of the detention. Robert pulled out his watch. It occurred to him that he would be too late to join Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Mason at their afternoon tea, and he felt vaguely sorry. Presently he heard a rumbling noise, and he thought that at last the train was getting under way.

Robert looked around incuriously. The train was not yet moving. The rumbling noise grew louder and nearer. At the same moment the terrifying headlight of a locomotive loomed up in the rear. It was the through express from the West, and it was bearing down upon them with unrelenting speed. A horrible panic filled the car,—cries of terror, desperate struggles, imprecations, prayers, the meanest cowardice and the most sublime heroism mingled in an instant of time. Robert was now fully awake. He sat near the front of the car, and started for the open door. Those ahead of him had already made their escape. An old Irishwoman in the seat opposite was bent on saving both herself and her satchel. "Drop it!" cried Robert. "Hurry!" He waited an instant for her to pass, and then it was too late. The crash came, and Robert knew nothing more.

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It so chanced that on Stephen's wedding day Mrs. Costello was occupied all morning. At luncheon she had several guests. It was not until nearly dark that the last guest left and Mrs. Costello found herself free. She had not forgotten Robert's manuscript. She sent Katie upstairs after it, as she wanted to be in the drawing-room herself when Robert returned. It rather amused her to find that she was not willing to have Mrs. Mason pour his tea. "I'm getting like all other old women," she said to herself. "They begrudge every one the pleasure of waiting on their sons." But Mrs. Costello hoped that Robert might be a little late, for she wanted to have read his manuscript before he came in. She sat down in the low chair near the fire and waited. Katie brought down the manuscript and lighted the lamps.

"Be sure to light the Italian room, Katie," said Mrs. Costello, "and leave the gas in Mr. Pendexter's room turned up brightly. He will be home any moment now."

Mrs. Costello unfolded the manuscript and began to read. She had meant to run through it rapidly, so as to have finished before Robert came in. Afterwards she would read it over again more leisurely. But once started, she lost herself in the reading and forgot everything else. The title made her shiver. She mistook Robert's meaning. She thought that he meant Death. Eagerly and yet with a vague sense of uneasiness she read the manuscript through:—

### "THE NAKED HORSEMAN

"The valley was very large. It extended on all sides of me like a great plain. But it was not interminable. To

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the west a range of distant mountains cut the sky like huge pasteboard fashioned into grotesque outlines. To the east there were near foothills. Back of them were wild granite mountains, whose peaks are forever white with snow. In front of me the valley swept unbrokenly to the south. In the distance it leaped up to meet the sky the way the ocean meets it. On the horizon there was nothing. Beyond this horizon you felt that there was everything. Behind me, — but I could not see what was behind me. I was free, I thought, to turn in the saddle, yet every time I made to do so, I was prevented. It was not the wind. It was not a bodily touch. It was something vast and irresistible. It drew me up the valley towards that horizon which disclosed nothing and held everything. I did not have to urge my horse. He caught the spirit of the moment and was steeped in motion. We swept up the valley at an impossible speed. But I was not terrified. I could not hear the horse's footfall. I could not hear the wind. Everything was silent. Then in front of me there stretched a shallow gulch. A long, gentle slope led down to the bottom of it. A long, gentle slope led up on the other side to the top of it. I crossed the brim of the gulch. Then I heard footfalls behind me, the rhythmic footfalls of a rapidly galloping horse. But I could not look around. My own horse pricked up his ears and went still faster. But the footfalls of the galloping horse came nearer and nearer. It seemed strange that I could not look around. Then the footfalls came abreast of me and I was free to look. I saw a large roan horse with a mane and tail of cream color. No bridle was in his mouth. No saddle was upon his back. But astride him sat a naked man. He was lithe and beau-

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tiful. His strong arms were hanging at his sides, and his hands were resting as if they had no weight against his strong legs. I could see the profile of his face. It was strong and finely chiseled. His hair was tawny, like burnished copper. It tossed about his head, a surging red-gold halo. It seemed to me quite natural that the man should be riding there beside me. I was not terrified. I was not even astonished. Then the man spoke. 'Faster, little brother, faster!' I could feel the air against my cheeks. It was not the wind. It was the air itself that we leaped out to meet. Side by side we rushed along, the smite of the air growing stronger and stronger. Faster and faster went the horses. The blood in my veins ran wilder and wilder. But I was unafraid. In my heart there was a great exultation. It was not I who swept towards the horizon beyond which there is everything. It was Life, — Life its very self. It was Life that had overtaken me, that was transforming me and absorbing me. And there were no longer two of us. There was but one horse and there was but one horseman. I could hear the rhythmic footfalls on the hard floor of the valley. It was the great roan horse with mane and tail of cream color. There was no bridle in his mouth. There was no saddle on his back. I sat astride him easily. My bare arms hung at the side of my great chest. My idle hands rested as if they had no weight against the hard muscles of my legs. Then I leaned over and spoke to the great horse. 'Faster, little brother, faster!' No quiver ran through his great frame. But swifter and fiercer the air smote against my face and my hair, — the air that we leaped out to meet. It smote against my chest and against my arms and against my



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legs. The wine of Life was in my veins. The joy of Life was in my heart. Then I shouted aloud, 'Faster, little brother, faster, faster!' But the great horse did not hear me. He was but a part of the wide valley that lay behind me. I could no longer hear the footfalls of his galloping. With the wide earth valley I was sweeping over the brim of that far horizon beyond which there is everything. A moment passed, or it might have been an eternity, I did not know which. For the moment, or for the eternity, I and the world were one. Then I felt again the old saddle under me, and in my left hand the old reins. I looked around me. I was at the edge of a shallow gulch. A long, gentle slope led down to the bottom of it. A long, gentle slope led up on the opposite side to the top of it. I had passed over great space and much time had gone. So I thought. But it was less than a foot. It was less than an instant. Then I knew that in the life of the Spirit there is neither space nor time."

Mrs. Costello put the manuscript down on the table beside her. It seemed to her a remarkable production for one so unused to any sort of composition, and she wondered what mood had called it forth. But it made her still more uneasy about Robert himself. It seemed to indicate so slight a hold upon the world-life and too great a readiness to be off into the life beyond.

Mrs. Costello listened anxiously for Robert's footstep. Mrs. Mason joined her. The tea things were brought in. Almost unwillingly Mrs. Costello made the tea. Presently Professor Heim dropped in. He was enthusiastic about certain tendencies in modern German literature. He had

interesting news of the distinguished scholar that the Kaiser was just lending to Harvard for a year. Ordinarily, these subjects interested Mrs. Costello very genuinely, but this afternoon the talk fell mainly to Professor Heim and Mrs. Mason. Mrs. Costello listened politely, and occasionally she threw in a casual remark, but it was evident that her thought was elsewhere. Professor Heim withdrew. Mrs. Mason went up to dress for dinner. Still Mrs. Costello sat before the fire listening. It was six o'clock when she finally went upstairs herself. She dressed hurriedly, but with even more than her usual care. She came directly back to the drawing-room. She was so determined that Robert should have come home, that when Katie announced dinner, Mrs. Costello told her to go upstairs and call Mr. Pendexter. It rather added to Mrs. Costello's uneasiness when Katie answered, "I've been upstairs already, ma'am, but Mr. Pendexter is not in his room."

Mrs. Mason came downstairs and the two ladies went in to dinner. The soup was brought. Before Mrs. Costello tasted hers, she turned to Mrs. Mason and said almost apologetically, "It is foolish, I know, but I feel strangely uneasy about Mr. Pendexter. If you will excuse me a moment, my dear, I think I will just step to the telephone and ask if there has been any reported delay in the trains."

Mrs. Costello went to the telephone in the little back hall and called up the Union Station. "Please give me the Superintendent's Office," she asked. "Yes, the matter is important. Yes. Say that Mrs. Costello wants to speak to the Superintendent, or to one of his assistants. Yes, I will hold the line. Please ask him to make haste."

A few moments later, Mrs. Costello hurried back to the

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dining-room. Mrs. Mason and Katie saw at once that something had happened. Very quietly Mrs. Costello told them of the accident and such details as she had been able to gather. Then she began hurriedly to give her orders. "Get me my cloak, Katie. Quickly, please. Yes, the heavy one with the fur collar. And bring the dark velvet bonnet. Any gloves will do." Then Mrs. Costello turned to Mrs. Mason. "No, my dear. You would better not go with me. Stay here, please, and have everything in readiness. See that there is plenty of hot water. You may call a cab for me. No, — please don't. I shall make better time on the trolley. Call up Dr. Babcock and ask if he cannot meet me at Waltham. They have improvised a hospital near the station, and Mr. Pendexter has probably been carried there."

It was nearly nine o'clock before Mrs. Costello reached the temporary hospital. There was great confusion. Men and women with drawn, stricken faces were hunting for wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons. Mrs. Costello was faint with pity. The surgeons in charge were almost exhausted, but there was something about Mrs. Costello that compelled attention. One of the younger men went with her down the long row of cots.

In a remote corner Mrs. Costello and the young doctor found Robert. He was very still and very white. His eyes were closed. With professional instinct the doctor felt his pulse.

"Is he dead?" asked Mrs. Costello.

"No, he is still alive," the doctor answered gravely.

"But you think he cannot live?" asked Mrs. Costello.

"I do not know," said the doctor, and turned away with

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a heavy heart to attend to other sufferers. But first he remembered to bring Mrs. Costello a chair.

For some moments Mrs. Costello stood at Robert's side. She had come to him with all the strong force of her will bent upon claiming him on the side of Life. She took Robert's hand. It was not cold, — thank God for that! Mrs. Costello threw aside her cloak and knelt down at the side of the cot. She prayed, but not in words. She prayed with her whole being, and in her prayer there was immense entreaty.

The hours slowly dragged themselves around, but Mrs. Costello was not conscious of them. She was quite unmindful of herself. All her thought was concentrated upon Robert. She was trying with all the force of her large will to penetrate the deathlike stupor and to bring Robert life.

A slight movement in the cot back of her attracted Mrs. Costello's attention. She turned to see if she could be of any service. An old Irishwoman was lying there. She was trying to be very still, but she was restless in spite of herself. Her small bright eyes watched Mrs. Costello's every movement.

Mrs. Costello went over to the cot and took the woman's hand. "Are you much hurt?" she asked.

"I dunno, mum, I'm sure. There's something awful funny the matter with my legs. But I wish, mum, I was more hurt'n I am, mum. I do indeed, mum, fur p'haps that beautiful young gentleman would n't 'a' got hurt at all, then."

The woman spoke in a low voice that could hardly disturb any one, so Mrs. Costello said, "Tell me about it, please, if it won't tire you too much."

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It was evidently a great relief to the poor old soul to talk, and she needed no second invitation. "I ought n't to have been in that car at all, at all, mum. I knowed that right well. Before I come away from home, me auld man says to me, says he, 'You're a great hand fur travelin', Bridget O'Leary,' says he, 'and fur spendin' your money on them corporation railroads. But mind what I'm tellin' you now,' says he, 'if you want to come safe out of it all. Don't you go and set in the last car of the train, nor in the forwardest car neither, fur if there be any accident, them is the very cars as is most likely to get smashed up. Now mind what I'm a-tellin' you.' It was clever in him, mum, was n't it?"

Mrs. Costello said that it was, and Mrs. O'Leary continued: "I bided his words, mum, but the saints forgive me, I did n't act up to 'em. I got into the other car, mum, but it was crowded with people, and it do tire a body so to stand. I had a satchel too, mum, that I dasent put down onto the floor, for the auld man would never 'a' forgive me if I'd gone and let it got stole. I ought n't to have gone into that car, mum, fur me auld man's words was still in me ears, but I thought I'd jist chance it fur oncet, and really, mum, a body ought to take their turn once in a while, fur if nobody set in them two cars, the corporation railroad would take 'em off, they're that mean, mum! I was up and down oneasy when the train took to restin' so long between them stytions. But it would 'a' looked sort o' dafty fur me to get out. I was jist settin' there peaceable when I heard a rushin' noise. I turned around, mum, and there was a locomotive engine comin' down the aisle." Mrs. Costello shuddered. "It was jist

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awful, mum, jist awful, and all the folks a-yellin' bloody murder. I'd 'a' gone to glory then and there, mum, if it had n't 'a' been fur that beautiful young gentleman lyin' there. Is he your son, mum?"

Mrs. Costello shook her head.

"I'm glad o' that. I thought p'rhaps he was. He held back just a minute, mum, and gave me the chanst of me life. I was tossed like a bag o' praties down the aisle and through the doors into the next car where I rightly belonged. I must have landed on me knees, mum, fur there's something awful funny the matter with me legs. But I wish fur a fact, mum, that that there beautiful young gentlemen had been in me place. I have n't many more years to live anyway, and me auld man could 'a' got along without me fur a little while, he's that handy about the house."

Mrs. Costello felt grateful to the poor old woman for giving her this simple account of Robert's heroism. She said kindly, "Thank you, my dear, for telling me about it. I think you ought not to talk any more now."

Mrs. Costello had all the while been watching Robert. She kept her eyes on his face. It seemed as if such concentrated will-power must drive back the Angel of Death, and win Robert once more to life. The young doctor had said that everything that could be done was already done, and nothing remained but to wait. Dr. Babcock did not arrive, — Mrs. Mason had evidently failed to reach him. From time to time some poor tortured body ceased to live, and a spirit took its flight. The stillness of the night was broken by the sound of weeping. Mrs. Costello was not herself conscious of fatigue or of any other bodily sensation, but she responded with painful readiness to the in-

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tense spiritual drama going on about her. She was battling for a life, for Robert's life. Could she have had him alone, she felt that she must win; but here in the midst of this lingering flight of souls, the conflict was against tremendous odds. Mrs. Costello felt that she was in the presence of something more powerful than herself. She knew without any word from the young doctor that Robert wavered between two worlds, the world of the living and the world of the dead. She thought of his own curious expression, "the horizon beyond which there is everything," and it seemed to her that he stood on the brink, a long way off, and that unless some detaining hand, stronger than her own, reached out to him, he must inevitably slip over the brink of that horizon into the eternal enlightenment.

The night wore on. There was no visible change. The young doctor came at frequent intervals. Each time he felt Robert's pulse. It was growing perceptibly weaker. Mrs. Costello no longer asked the doctor's opinion. She knew that he was powerless. She herself yielded no point in this duel with Death. She knew that she fought single-handed in this alien atmosphere, but she felt that if she could but penetrate Robert's stupor and arouse his own will to live, the victory might still be theirs. She allowed herself no illusions. She knew full well how very feeble that will was at best, and she had to admit to herself that perhaps it had now gone out altogether. Mrs. Costello's intuitions told her that if this were the case, her own fight must be unavailing.

The window by Robert's cot faced the east. As the hour advanced, faint streaks of light shot across the eastern sky. The splendor spread and deepened, pressing

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back the encircling darkness. It was the world-old drama of Day conquering Night. Mrs. Costello was never insensible to its beauty. It seemed to her always the promise of still greater light in the spirit. She glanced out of the window. Though her heart was very heavy, she felt refreshed and uplifted by the glory of the coming day.

When Mrs. Costello turned once more to Robert, she was surprised to see that his eyes were open. She bent over him eagerly. A lovely smile illuminated Robert's face, and Mrs. Costello knew that he recognized her. But he could not speak. For several moments they gazed at each other, two friends who knew the truth and could face it unshrinkingly. Then Robert's eyes looked beyond Mrs. Costello into another world, and about his lips there played the inscrutable smile of those who waken to new wonders.

Mrs. Costello knelt at Robert's bedside in the attitude of prayer, a voiceless prayer, in which there was only submission and no entreaty. When at last she raised her head and looked at Robert's face, his eyelids were partly closed, the light had gone out of his eyes, and she knew the spirit had wholly taken flight.

With her own hands Mrs. Costello gently closed the unseeing eyes and crossed the unresisting arms. Still she knelt at Robert's side, her heart full of mother grief at the passing of this, her almost son. Then she buried her face in her hands, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

When Mrs. Costello once more regained her composure, she arose and lightly touched Robert's forehead with her lips. Very softly she repeated those wonderful words of St. Francis:—



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“Blessed be my Lord for our sister, the death of the body, from whom no man escapeth.

“Blessed are they who are found walking by thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.

“Praise ye and bless ye the Lord, and give thanks unto Him, and serve Him with great humility.”

## CHAPTER XXI

### SAPPHO'S FINAL JUDGMENT

Two weeks had passed since Robert's death. It was in the late afternoon, and Mrs. Costello sat before the fire in the big drawing-room, knitting. Katie had lighted all the lamps. There were flowers on the table near the window, and in the bowl on top of the carved Indian cabinet. A single rose stood in a vase on the prie-dieu in the tiny oratory. Mrs. Costello was dressed for dinner. She had put on her rarest lace and her choicest jewels. In her face there were no visible traces of sorrow. There were no signs of mourning about the well-lighted and flower-bedecked room.

It was not that Mrs. Costello felt no sorrow, or that her household had ceased to mourn. But Alicia was coming home, and in her honor there were to be only smiles and rejoicing. The steamer was due that afternoon. Mrs. Costello had not trusted herself to go to the steamer. She knew that Alicia had not heard of the accident, and would naturally inquire about Robert. So kind Mrs. Mason was delegated to meet Alicia, and to make such non-committal replies to all Alicia's inquiries as would leave her in happy ignorance. Mrs. Costello knew that she could trust Mrs. Mason's tactfulness, and with Alicia quite unsuspecting of bad news, it would be possible to keep the first hours of her home-coming free from gloom and unhappiness. But it would not be easy. Just how difficult it was going to be, Mrs. Costello began to realize

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as she sat there waiting for Alicia. In spite of her contrary resolution, Mrs. Costello could not keep her mind from dwelling upon that other afternoon when she had sat there before the fire waiting for Robert, and he had not come.

At last it became intolerable. Mrs. Costello put aside her knitting, and began walking up and down the drawing-room. The arduous discipline of years had not sufficed to reconcile her to Robert's death. She was not rebellious, but there was some subtle element in the tragedy which she could not explain to herself. It haunted her spirit, and kept it from consenting to the event with that large freedom which she commonly brought to bear upon the daily drama of living.

Mrs. Costello questioned whether she had not undertaken too difficult a part, and whether, after all, it was not foolish and uncalled for to have gone to such elaborations in order to shield Alicia from what would probably be to her a mere passing shadow. Robert had been a pleasant element in their life at Cocumella, but that was seven months past, and since then Alicia had seen many people and many places, and had had a reasonable chance to forget Robert. It might have been better to have Mrs. Mason tell Alicia as they drove out from the steamer, or even to have gone herself. So Mrs. Costello reasoned, and yet she knew in her heart that if she had it all to do over again, she would do precisely the same thing.

It was after six when the carriage finally drove around the side of the house and stopped in front of the large south door. Mrs. Costello ran down the staircase, and in a moment Alicia was in her arms,— Alicia, radiant with life

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and health and happiness. Mrs. Costello finally released herself from Alicia's embrace, and held the girl off at arm's length. "Let me look at you, dear," she said. "How splendid you are, and how good it is to have you back again! Come in by the fire and get warm. I must have one good long look at you before I let you go upstairs."

Mrs. Costello kept Alicia's hand in hers, and led her up the half-flight to the drawing-room. They moved towards the fireplace. But Alicia was not cold. She was too pleasantly excited to stop in any one spot. She made the tour of the drawing-room several times, peeped into the oratory, swept through the Italian room and the dining-room, went out in the kitchen to speak to Katie and the other servants, and even proposed an expedition across the garden to the studio house. But Mrs. Costello discouraged this, as it was dark and cold there, she said, and Alicia must be getting ready for dinner. Mrs. Costello smiled with quiet pleasure to see Alicia's genuine delight in finding herself once more at home.

"It is just as it used to be," cried Alicia, "but prettier than ever. I expected to find everything topsy-turvy now that you have a man in the house. It was very uncivil in Mr. Pendexter not to come to the steamer and help me through the custom-house. I shall tell him so at dinner, and ask if Boston has frozen his manners."

Mrs. Costello stood aghast, but fortunately Alicia was not looking at her. Alicia was looking at herself in an old oval mirror, and arranging a stray lock of hair. Mrs. Costello said with some difficulty, "Mr. Pendexter will not dine with us to-night, dear."

Alicia wheeled around incredulously. "Not even dine

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with me, when I've just got home!" she exclaimed. "That's more uncivil still. What ever has come over the man? You have n't quarreled with him, have you, Carissima, and packed him off to those cousins at Bolton?"

"No," answered Mrs. Costello, trying to smile. "But really, Alicia dear, you must get ready for dinner. Do go, and after dinner we'll talk about everybody and everything under the sun."

Reluctantly Alicia went up to dress. Mrs. Costello did not offer to go with her, for she felt unequal to answering any more questions. She took up her knitting and busied herself as best she could.

When Alicia came downstairs, Mrs. Costello kissed her affectionately. "How beautiful you are, dear!" she exclaimed, in genuine admiration. "And how becoming the new gown! I think the sea air agrees with you."

Alicia put her arms around the older woman. "It's not the sea air, Carissima," she said; "it's getting home!"

But the dinner was difficult. There were only the three women, and two of them were acting a part. Mrs. Costello asked after all their English friends, even the most casual of them, and Mrs. Mason filled in every conversational gap with almost nervous haste. At last the dinner came to an end and the ladies returned to the drawing-room.

Alicia slipped her arm through Mrs. Costello's. "Now you *must* tell me about Mr. Pendexter," she said. "I simply won't be put off any longer."

Mrs. Mason discreetly went upstairs, and Katie closed the folding-doors into the dining-room. The two friends were alone.

"Shall we sit here before the fire, dear?" asked Mrs.

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Costello. "But first I must speak to Katie." She opened the door into the dining-room. "Katie."

"Yes, ma'am."

"If any one calls this evening, say that I am engaged. In case the matter is important, Mrs. Mason will attend to it in the Italian room. Remember that I do not wish to be disturbed."

"Yes, ma'am."

When Mrs. Costello turned back into the drawing-room, Alicia was standing on the rug in front of the fire. Her shoulders were thrown back, and her face was slightly upturned. She seemed the embodiment of youth and beauty. Could Stephen have seen her to-night, he would have said, with Donald, that she was certainly under twenty-five. Alicia made Mrs. Costello sit in her accustomed chair. Then she brought herself a low stool and sat with her arms resting on Mrs. Costello's lap.

"Now tell me all about Mr. Pendexter, Carissima," Alicia said, her face rich in tell-tale color. "Do you guess why I am so anxious to know? It is because I love him, dear, *love him*, and have come home to tell him so!"

Mrs. Costello caught her breath in a dry sob. Her task was to be a hundred times more difficult than she had imagined.

Alicia started at the change in Mrs. Costello's face, and grasped her hand appealingly. "Tell me quickly," she said. "Is there anything wrong with Robert? Is he ill? Why was he not here to-night?"

Mrs. Costello leaned over and put her arms around Alicia. "My poor child!" she said. "My poor child!"

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Alicia pulled herself away and demanded almost fiercely, "Is Robert dead? Tell me, — is he *dead*?"

"Yes, Alicia, Robert is dead."

"Oh, my God, my *God*!" moaned Alicia. Then she buried her face in her friend's lap and wept passionately.

Mrs. Costello had never seen Alicia so moved. It was difficult to retain her own composure. She did not attempt to comfort the girl by any spoken word. She smoothed the beautiful sunny hair and from time to time gently pressed the grief-clenched hands. Almost in a whisper Mrs. Costello breathed the comforting words of the Gîtâ: "Those who are wise in spiritual things grieve neither for the dead nor for the living. I myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we hereafter cease to be." Gently she stroked Alicia's hair, and poured into her troubled spirit such comfort as she could.

When Alicia's tears were somewhat spent, she asked Mrs. Costello pitifully to tell her all she possibly could about Robert. She would hear no detail about the accident beyond the fact that Robert had given his life for another's, but she wanted to know about his life during the short weeks that he had been at Mrs. Costello's. "Did you know that Robert loved me, and wanted to marry me?" Alicia asked almost shyly.

"Yes, dear."

"Did he tell you so?" Alicia asked eagerly.

"Not in words, dear. I think he would not have spoken to any one about so sacred an experience."

"But are you sure?" persisted Alicia. "How did you know, Carissima? Tell me truly, for it would break my

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heart to think that, after all, I was mistaken, and that Robert did not love me."

"You may feel perfectly sure of Robert's love, Alicia. I saw it at Cocumella. And especially I saw it at Naples, when we left him standing there on the pier. He had a very tell-tale face, you remember. Robert loved you heart and soul, dear. He could not have said it more plainly in words. It pained me deeply, for I did n't think you cared for him."

"I did n't care, — at least not then," said Alicia. "That is a part of the misery of it. I thought of him often, but only in connection with some little incident of our life at Cocumella."

Alicia stopped and looked wistfully into the fire.

"And when did you begin to care, dear?" asked Mrs. Costello, gently, for she saw that it was a relief to Alicia to talk about Robert.

"Not until this autumn. Not until after you left me."

"Did Robert write?" asked Mrs. Costello.

"No, not once. I *never* had a letter from him. You remember Lord Whittlesea, the young man we met down in Devonshire and that you rather liked?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Costello; "I remember him very well."

"When I was with the Conynghams, he got himself invited down for a week-end."

"Yes, dear," whispered Mrs. Costello, encouragingly.

"We were very good friends, you know, and I thought he was safe from any notion of love-making. But before I could prevent it, he had asked me to be his wife."

"I cannot wonder at it, dear Alicia," said Mrs. Cos-



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tello, indulgently. "If I had been Lord Whittlesea, I should have asked you long before."

Alicia ignored the gentle flattery, too sad and too busy with her own thoughts to heed much else.

"I felt dreadfully about it. I had been friendly, but that was all. I never even *thought* of his falling in love with me. It always seemed to me that a girl had only herself to blame for it if she let a man propose to her. I was afraid that quite unconsciously I had given Lord Whittlesea some encouragement."

"I am quite sure you had n't," said Mrs. Costello. "You have nothing to blame yourself for."

"No, I don't think I have," answered Alicia, with an air of conviction. "I asked Lord Whittlesea if I had ever encouraged him in the least little bit, and he said not."

"He is a gentleman, Alicia, and he would say that anyway. But I should have expected him to be more persistent, and also perhaps to win. He seemed to me a very attractive man, and quite above the average."

"He is. He is a thoroughly fine fellow, and he was very nice and manly about it. He asked if he might try to make me care for him,—if there were any one else, any obstacle —" Alicia buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

Mrs. Costello leaned over and kissed the girl. "Yes, dear?" she said once more.

"And then," sobbed Alicia, "I knew there was some one else, that it was Robert!" Alicia raised her face and looked at Mrs. Costello eagerly. "How did you feel, Carissima," she whispered, "when Léon Costello first told you that he loved you?"

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A beautiful smile swept over Mrs. Costello's face, and pushed back the weight of years. "I felt, Alicia, that I had been taken to a new world."

"It was so with me," said Alicia, simply. "I had not thought of Robert until that moment, and since then I have thought of nothing else."

There was a long pause, each woman busy with her own thoughts. Then Alicia said: "I don't think love *is* blind. When I chose Robert, I knew perfectly well that Lord Whittlesea was younger and stronger and better-looking, that he had a more assured social background and belonged much more to our world than Robert did. It surprised me that I should think of those things at such a moment. But I did. And yet I chose Robert."

"I wonder *why* you did," said Mrs. Costello, wishing to keep Alicia talking.

"It was Robert's wonderful spirit. He was really a little mouse of a man, — it seems very cold-blooded, but I told myself that quite frankly. He would have looked very drab alongside of Lord Whittlesea. It would have hurt me to see them together. I thought how odd it would have looked to see them both on horseback. But Robert was on fire. I knew that I had but to think, and he would know what I was thinking about. With Lord Whittlesea, I should have had to spell it all out."

"I think you are hardly fair to Lord Whittlesea," said Mrs. Costello. "But Robert, as you say, was on fire, — a very unusual spirit. I got to be very fond of him during the few weeks that he was here. He seemed almost like a son. He was always so helpful and considerate. With all his inexperience, you know he had very good manners."

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He had his little awkwardnesses, but somehow they did not offend. And he was surprisingly observant. He made mistakes, but he seldom repeated them."

"I noticed that at Cocumella," said Alicia. "How did he get on with his work?"

"Well, I don't know what progress he made, but he was a great worker. It steadied us all to have him in the house. I knew that it would. His visit, dear, was a perfect success. There was not a blemish in it!"

"Why did he die, then?" asked Alicia, hotly. "It seems a hideous, unnecessary blow to both of us!"

"I felt that it was hideous and unnecessary at first, Alicia. When I knew that he was in danger, I fought almost fiercely for his life."

"And don't you feel so now? Don't you feel that it was cruel and unnecessary for him to die *now*, — *now* when there was such special reason for his living? Tell me truly. Can you feel that there was any reason or sanity in Robert's death? If I could feel sure of that, it might help to reconcile me to it."

"It will take time, dear, for you to be able to see it in such a light. I have done little but think about Robert since his death. Not only have I missed him sadly, but it has seemed essential for me to understand his death, to consent to it in the full freedom of the spirit. It has not been easy, Alicia, and your coming home and telling me what you have, has made it still more difficult. It has added another tremendous fact to be accounted for and reconciled. I have been completely overwhelmed this evening, dear, and I have talked, I am afraid, almost incoherently, for my mind has been so dreadfully con-

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fused. But I begin to see the light. Shall I speak to you quite unreservedly, dear Alicia? Do you think that you can stand it now? Would it not be better to wait until to-morrow?"

Alicia sat upright and looked at her friend unfalteringly. "No," she answered bravely; "speak now, and speak as if I, too, were dead."

Mrs. Costello leaned over and kissed Alicia's forehead. "Happily you are not, dear," she said softly. Still she paused, for it was terribly difficult to say what she was going to say. Finally she reached over and took Alicia's two hands. "Look at me, Alicia," she said. "Do you know how much I love you, dear?"

"Yes," answered Alicia, almost inaudibly. "You love me best of all who are still living!"

"Remember that, dear. Remember it always, or you may hate me —"

"I could never do that," Alicia whispered.

"I am going to say what may seem to you quite a terrible thing, dear Alicia, and it is this, — that in the larger scheme of things, I see clearly to-night for the first time that it is better that Robert should have died!"

Alicia started, but she did not draw her hands away, nor did she take her eyes off Mrs. Costello's face.

"You know what a marvelous spirit Robert had," Mrs. Costello continued. "You know how wonderfully it expanded this past year. You told me, you remember, how astonishingly crude Robert was on the steamer. At York he was so changed that I rather chided you for not having presented him to me earlier. And then at Cocumella we had to get acquainted with him over again. There was

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not such a remarkable change in him here at home, — perhaps it was hardly possible, — but still he had grown perceptibly. And now comes the part, dear Alicia, that it has been so hard for me to see. Robert had reached his earth limit, — he had come to flower. It is true that he had done nothing as yet in the outer world of action. But his life has been an inspiration to his friends, and inwardly he came into his own. Had he lived, Robert would have been cruelly disappointed. Not even your perfect love, Alicia, could have carried him much farther. It would not have been right for him to have married you, dear, not in this incarnation. There are heights before *you* which Robert could not have scaled. But your meeting was not accidental. You will come together again. For Robert is not dead, — you know that, Alicia, — he is at the beginning of a new life. He has simply cast aside an inadequate tool, that could no longer serve his purpose, and is creating a new tool for finer uses. For Robert was inadequate, Alicia. Much as we both love him, we must admit that. He had not the organization for great things. He was over thirty-five, and had awakened very late, too late to build over his slender stock of tools. As I have thought about Robert since his death, I have much doubted whether his intelligence was at all equal to the tasks he planned for himself. His spirit came to be so big that, when he was here, I lost sight of these terrible limitations. I encouraged him to try the impossible. God knew better, and in his mercy turned defeat into victory. Can you see it so, Alicia, — can you see that it would have been a tragedy had Robert lived? He could not, I think, have fulfilled his promise, and that is always

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a terrible tragedy. He went about his tasks with tremendous industry. He was a man, Alicia, in spite of his slender physique, and, as the accident proved, capable of the heroic. But he had not the materials to build with. He himself would have been the first to find it out. That would have been the tragedy. I doubt whether he could have stood it. As it was, he went still believing in his own powers, — or at least still hopeful, for I think that he already had some misgivings. I believe that the will to live died before the accident came. At the hospital I could not reach Robert's will. Could we have worked together, I feel that he might have lived. But I was fighting single-handed, and I could not prevail. Robert went, however, carrying the wonderful part about him with him, — the spirit, — and leaving behind him only the inadequate organs of the earth life. Robert had still much to learn here. I think that he will come back. If the choice is his, I think that he will want to come back and serve the world in some large way. Have I at all made you feel that Robert's death is right, dear, or have I only seemed cruel?"

"You are never cruel, Carissima. It is destiny that is so cruel, so needlessly cruel."

"In what way, dear, — surely not in giving Robert this greater chance, and sparing him the bitterness of an unavoidable defeat?"

"No, not cruel to him, perhaps, but cruel to me in dragging me in so needlessly. Why did Lord Whittlesea propose to me? Why did my thought turn to Robert after so many months? Why did I fly across the ocean to tell him of my love, only to find this, — to find him *dead!*"

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In Alicia's protest there was a tone of utter despair. But Mrs. Costello was no longer dismayed. The whole situation had been growing clearer and clearer to her as she had tried to phrase it for Alicia. And now it seemed to her divinely right. She spoke patiently and with that air of certitude which Alicia had come to recognize and respect.

"Think, dear Alicia, of what your love has meant to Robert, of how it helped him to meet death worthily. Think of the joy and courage it gives him in seeking new entrance into action. And for yourself, dear, would you give up this love if you could? Would you pluck it out of your life? With all the pain, aren't you a richer woman for it?"

"Yes," answered Alicia. "I suppose the pain will die. I know the love will live. But oh, dear Mrs. Costello, if I might only have told Robert with my own lips, have given him one kiss before he died, I think I could meet it all!"

Mrs. Costello pressed Alicia's hand, and the two women sat together in silence. At last Mrs. Costello arose. "It is very late, dear," she said. "Shall we not go to bed?"

Alicia got up wearily and went with Mrs. Costello towards the staircase.

"We have forgotten the flowers," said Mrs. Costello, turning back a moment. "Won't you take them up to the bathroom, dear, and put them in water? Then they will be fresh again to-morrow. I must speak to Katie before I come up."

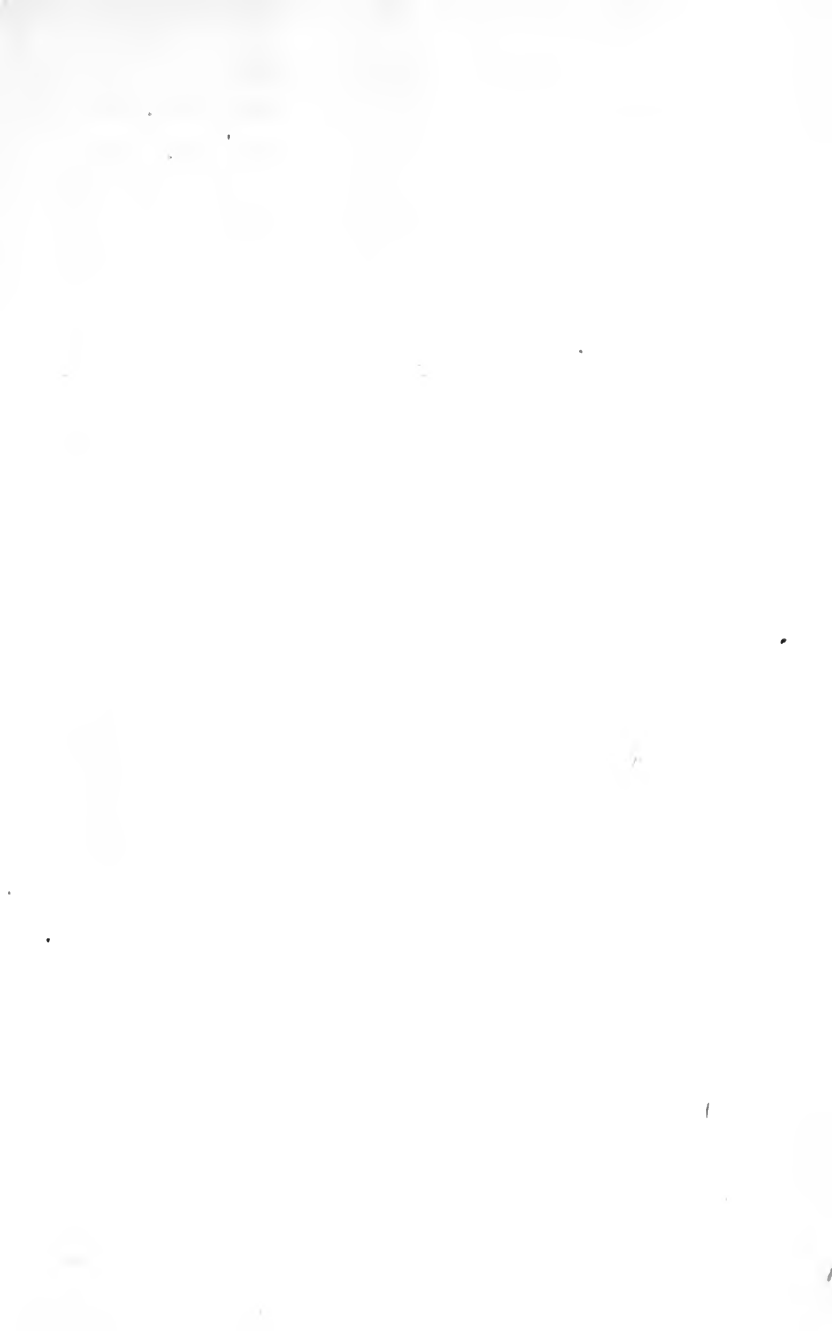
For the last two weeks, Mrs. Costello had avoided passing through the Italian room. It had seemed to her quite

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impossible. But to-night she went that way from choice. The room was just as Robert had left it. His books and papers were still about. Mrs. Costello went over to the writing-table and knelt there for some moments. "Dear Robert!" she whispered. "Dear son! I am content. In the full freedom of the spirit, I do consent to this, your death. It shall not be the night with us, when with you it is the dawn!"





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